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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE IMPACT OF BRITISH RULE  
UPON THE GOLD COAST ECONOMY:  
A STUDY IN POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

by

IAN BULLOCK

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SEPTEMBER, 1966



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "The Impact of British Rule upon the Gold Coast Economy: A Study in Political Geography," submitted by Ian Bullock in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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### ABSTRACT

From 1901 until 1957 the component areas of the Gold Coast - Ashanti, the Northern Territories and the Colony - were administered by the United Kingdom as a single colonial unit. In addition to providing a political framework for the development of nationalism and, ultimately, the modern state of Ghana, British rule also influenced the local economy. The present study is concerned with tracing the political impact of Great Britain upon the Gold Coast economy, during the colonial period.

Although there is good reason to believe that the original annexations were inspired by the possibility of economic advantages accruing to the metropolitan country, there is little evidence to support the view that deliberate 'exploitation' followed the establishment of British rule. On the other hand it is clear, in retrospect, that the policies adopted by the local Administration and the imperial Government were not always in the best interests of the Gold Coast. In particular, it was not until after 1945 that any serious attempts were made to counteract the development of an excessive dependence upon external trade.

World War II was in many ways a critically important period for the Gold Coast. By 1945 the political objective of self-government for colonial territories had been accepted





by Great Britain, and the state was believed to occupy a more important economic role than had previously been allowed. The war-time expedients of state-marketing and various government controls over the economy were retained in British West Africa after 1945. In addition, the governments of the four colonies undertook a number of new development projects, particularly in the industrial field. The prominence of public enterprise was one of the more significant colonial legacies bequeathed to the new state of Ghana in 1957.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am particularly grateful to Dr. S. I. Smith - who supervised the thesis - for his constant interest in the study, the encouragement he gave, and for the considerable amount of his time which he generously made available to me. Credit is also due to those members of the Department of Geography, both graduate students and staff, who were prepared to discuss various problems as they arose in the course of both researching and writing the thesis. Similarly my wife, Margaret, helped me to formulate some of my ideas by willingly listening to, and commenting upon, a good many loosely-conceived spoken thoughts. She also provided great assistance in preparing the maps. Professor O. F. G. Sitwell read a draft version of the thesis and indicated some of its more outstanding errors. He also offered valuable advice, and although it was not fully heeded, I wish to extend my thanks to him. Finally, Miss Lonna Hill valiantly, and ably, tackled the mammoth task of typing the thesis in a very short period of time, and Mr. Jack Chesterman reproduced the accompanying figures.





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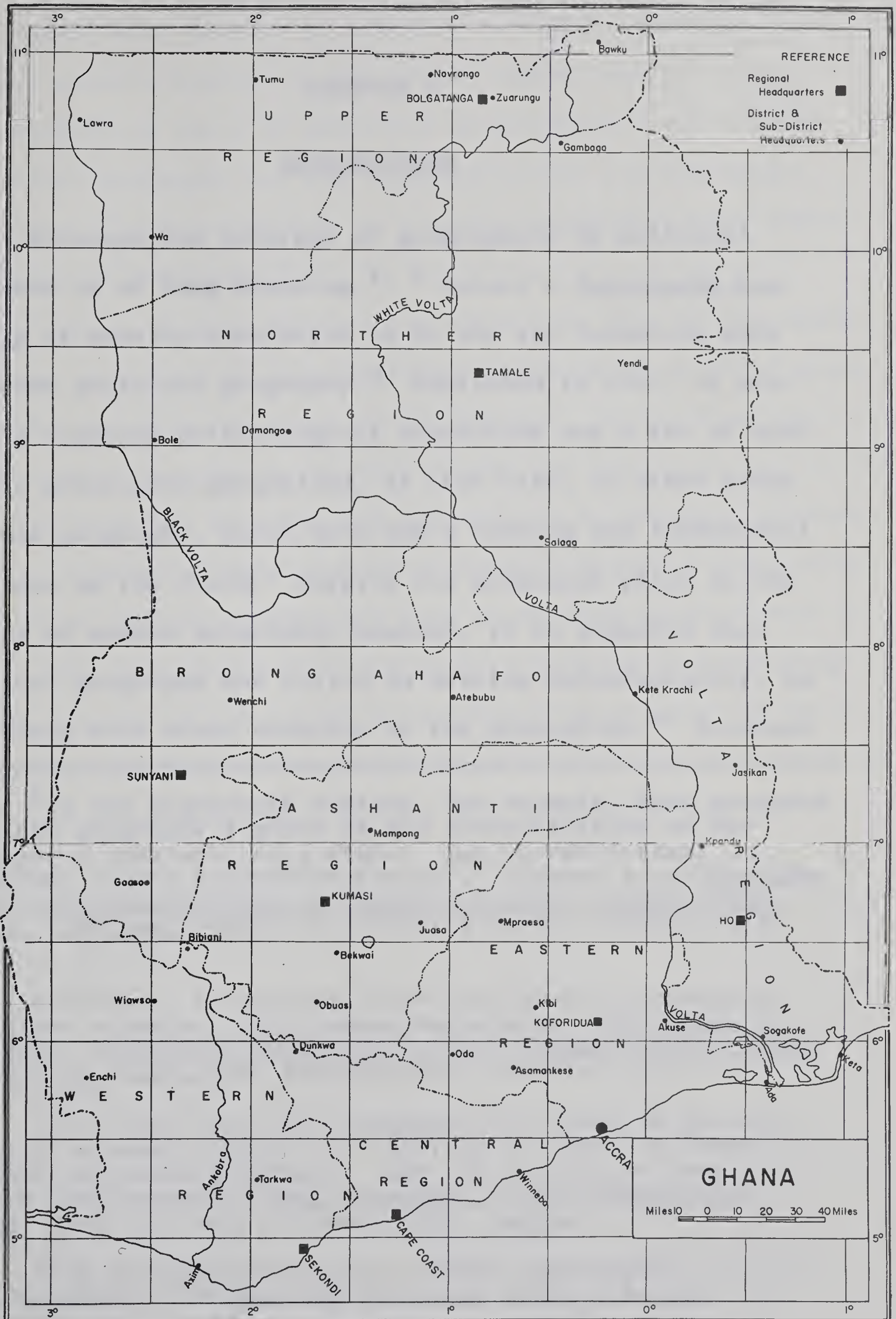








# 1960 PRINCIPAL ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS



Source: Map Prepared by the Survey of Ghana, Accra, 1960

Figure 2





## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Although the interest of geographers in political phenomena is of long standing,<sup>1, 2</sup> Ratzel's Politische Geographie is usually considered to be the key formative work of modern political geography.<sup>3</sup> Published in 1897, it provided a vigorous methodological exposition and a set of systematic principles unequalled, at that time, in other areas of human geography, which have had a lasting and fundamental influence on the field. Despite its prominent place in the history of modern geography, however, it is arguable that political geography has failed to develop satisfactorily, in comparison with other branches of the discipline.<sup>4</sup> Evidence

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<sup>1</sup>In the eighteenth century, for example, Kant accorded political geography a place in his classification of the branches of geography as a whole. See George Tatham, "Geography in the Nineteenth Century," Chapter 2 in Geography in the Twentieth Century: A Study of Growth, Fields, Techniques, Aims and Trends, ed. Griffith Taylor, London, 1957, p. 41.

Elsewhere, Hartshorne allows political geography an even older vintage. See Richard Hartshorne, The Nature of Geography: A Critical Survey of Current Thought in the Light of the Past, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1961, p. 202.

<sup>2</sup>The term 'political geography' was used in Britain, in the nineteenth century, to refer to the whole of what is now known as human geography. See the use of the term in J. M. D. Meiklejohn, A New Geography: On the Comparative Method, 23rd. ed. rev.; London, 1899, passim.

<sup>3</sup>See Richard Hartshorne, "Recent Developments in Political Geography I," American Political Science Review, Vol. 29 (1935), pp. 785-95.

<sup>4</sup>See W. A. Douglas Jackson, "Whither Political Geography?" Annals of the Association of American Geographers, Vol. 48 (1958), p. 178.





to support this view is provided by the small number of research workers engaged in the field, and by the low output of substantive works by political geographers.<sup>1</sup> In general, political geography has not expanded either its conceptual horizons or its techniques in a manner comparable with other branches of geography.<sup>2</sup>

There is good reason to believe that some of the shortcomings of political geography have been due to methodological uncertainty over the scope of the subject. It is tempting, for example, to ascribe to this factor the relatively excessive interest of political geographers in boundary studies, at the expense of more central problems. Somewhat ironically, the solid example of Ratzel's work would seem to have been partially responsible for confusion, simply by overshadowing fresh thought on the nature of political geography. It is in situations such as this that Bunge's rejection of historical methodological positions becomes most meaningful, on the grounds that " . . . the great men of our past might now, in view of more recent events, hold opinions different from those they held."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See National Academy of Sciences - National Research Council, The Science of Geography, pub. 1277, Washington, D. C., 1965, pp. 31-53.

<sup>2</sup>Exceptions might include studies which have used statistical techniques. e. g. J. R. Mackay, "The Interactance Hypothesis and Boundaries in Canada," Canadian Geographer, Vol. 11 (1958), pp. 1-8. Michael C. Roberts and Kennard W. Rummage, "The Spatial Variations in Urban Left-Wing Voting in England and Wales in 1951," Annals of the Association of American Geographers, Vol. 55 (1965), pp. 161-78.

<sup>3</sup>William Bunge, Theoretical Geography, Lund, 1962, p. 1.





Politische Geographie was basically concerned with the study of the state, and most of its content was devoted to systematic analysis of the state's territorial expression, including its shape, extent and boundaries. Ratzel also elaborated upon Spencer's theory of the organic state, thereby reflecting the prevailing determinism in contemporary scientific thought, and the environmental view of human geography developed in his own Anthropogeographie.<sup>1</sup> The state was conceived of as a dynamic organism, continually expanding and contracting its territorial extent according to population fluctuation and the need for physical sustenance.

Several facets of Ratzel's treatment of political geography - including the morphological description of the state, the 'organic' theory, and the general environmentalist view - were subsequently to play important parts in the development of the subject.<sup>2</sup> Although not original with him, and soon to be rejected by sociologists,<sup>3</sup> Ratzel's exposition of the doctrine of the organic state led directly to the growth of

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<sup>1</sup>See George Tatham, op. cit., pp. 63-67, and Idem., "Environmentalism and Possibilism," Chapter 6 in Geography in the Twentieth Century, op. cit., passim.

R. E. Dickinson and O. J. R. Howarth, The Making of Geography, Oxford, 1933, pp. 194-202.

<sup>2</sup>It is not intended to convey the impression that these elements originated completely from Ratzel's work; it is suggested that his use of them shaped later thought on the subject of political geography.

<sup>3</sup>Tatham, "Geography in the Nineteenth Century," op. cit., p. 65.



geopolitics.<sup>1</sup> In the period between the two world wars, the 'new science' of geopolitics assumed a seemingly important status in Germany, though its development was not relished by the more sober members of the geographic profession.<sup>2</sup> Through its association with National Socialism in Germany, and aggressive nationalist movements elsewhere, geopolitics became tantamount to a pseudo-scientific mandate for territorial expansion. In extreme cases, the notion of the organic state was adopted, vested with moral rectitude and established as a 'law' which justified oppression by the militarily strong. Although milder forms persisted for a while after 1945, geopolitics became academically discredited, and through historical and terminological association political geography shared in its disgrace.<sup>3</sup>

Outside Germany, however, fundamental criticism of the organic state theory, resulted in the concept being early discarded,<sup>4</sup> and this aspect of political geography received

<sup>1</sup>Hartshorne, "Recent Developments in Political Geography, I," op. cit., pp. 793-794.

Isaiah Bowman, "Geography Vs. Geopolitics," Geographical Review, Vol. 32 (1942), pp. 646-658.

G. R. Crone, "A German View of Geopolitics," Geographical Journal, Vol. 111 (1948), pp. 104-108.

<sup>2</sup>George Kiss, "Political Geography into Geopolitics: Recent Trends in Germany," Geographical Review, Vol. 32 (1942), pp. 632-645.

<sup>3</sup>W. A. Douglas Jackson, ed., Politics and Geographic Relationships: Readings on the Nature of Political Geography, Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1964, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup>See National Academy of Sciences - National Research Council, op. cit., p. 34.





little attention. Ellen Churchill Semple, the main conveyor of Ratzel's teachings into the English-speaking world, regarded the theory as nothing more than ". . . a scaffolding around the finished edifice . . . ." <sup>1</sup> of her doyen's work, and accordingly dismissed it as being both untenable and inessential. Rejection of the "scaffolding" may have left Ratzel's Anthropogeographie, with which Miss Semple was more concerned, untarnished, but it left his framework for political geography devoid of any semblance of dynamism. Remaining, were Ratzel's focus of study upon the state, his scheme for systematic and comparative analysis of its territorial features, and an overall 'deterministic tint'. It was to these that English-speaking political geographers turned. Later, the geopoliticians' insistence that political geography was concerned with static patterns, and their own discipline with function, process and movement, <sup>2</sup> seemed to further entrench political geographers in morphological studies.

Hartshorne's 1935 review of recent developments in political geography placed the three residual elements of Politische Geographie in a central perspective. <sup>3</sup> The environmentalist view of the subject, with which Hartshorne did not concur but to which he was less adamantly opposed than he later became, <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>E. C. Semple, Influences of Geographical Environment, New York, 1911, p. V.

<sup>2</sup>Kiss, op. cit., p. 641.

<sup>3</sup>Hartshorne, "Recent Developments in Political Geography, I," op. cit., pp. 785-804.

<sup>4</sup>Idem., Perspective on the Nature of Geography, London, 1961, pp. 55-60.





was found to be firmly established, particularly in North America and in Britain. It could be summarised as:

. . . the study of the relations between man's political activities and organizations (including the state, but also parties, etc.) and the natural environment or earth conditions . . . .<sup>1</sup>

Hartshorne's own definition of the field, based upon the interpretation of geography as a chorological science, held that:

. . . political geography is the science of political areas, or more specifically, the study of the state as a characteristic of areas in relation to the other characteristics of areas.<sup>2</sup>

Both of these definitions thus placed great emphasis upon the central position of the state, as an area, in political geography, and in practice this emphasis was accentuated to the point of almost excluding other matters of interest. The 'environmentalists' - amongst whom Hartshorne included Fairgrieve, Newbigin, Fawcett and Semple<sup>3</sup> - were principally concerned with the physical properties (i.e. the 'physical environment') and resources of particular states. Too often, however, the result of their work was " . . . a confused mixture of general and political geography,"<sup>4</sup> with little to differentiate it from conventional regional analyses. Nevertheless, that school of thought still finds occasional

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<sup>1</sup>Idem., "Recent Developments in Political Geography, I," op. cit., p. 797.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 804.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 797.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit. [This quotation refers specifically to Fawcett's study of the British Empire.]





advocacy today.<sup>1</sup> For example:

The field of Political Geography is concerned with two basic considerations. First, and of fundamental importance, is the analysis of the relationships between community and physical environment.<sup>2</sup>

Hartshorne's interest in the state, on the other hand, was dominated by a concern with its morphological composition. His detailed scheme of study, for political geography, was proposed under three main headings:<sup>3</sup>

1. Descriptive analysis of the state.
2. Interpretation of the present area.
3. Appraisal of the present territorial area and its problems.

Each category embraced a wide range of morphological features, and it would seem that many American texts dealing with political geography have adhered fairly closely to this model,<sup>4</sup> which, in turn, owes much to Ratzel's work.

In the past two and a half decades, essentially since publication of Hartshorne's Nature of Geography,<sup>5</sup> however,

<sup>1</sup>See Samuel Van Valkenburg and Carl L. Stotz, Elements of Political Geography, New York, 1954, 400 pp.

<sup>2</sup>A. E. Moodie, Geography Behind Politics, London, 1963, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>Richard Hartshorne, "Recent Developments in Political Geography, II," American Political Science Review, Vol. 29 (1935), p. 943.

<sup>4</sup>For example, see the contents of the following: Hans W. Weigert, et. al., Principles of Political Geography, New York, 1957, 723 pp.

Derwent Whittlesey, The Earth and the State: A Study in Political Geography, 2nd. ed., New York, 1951, 618 pp.

<sup>5</sup>First published in 1939. Hartshorne, The Nature of Geography, op. cit.





the concept of geography as the study of 'areal differentiation' has become established as the mainstream in methodological thought.<sup>1</sup> Correspondingly, the 'deviationist' environmental school has undergone contraction.<sup>2</sup> Although the notion of earth-state relationships still finds some acceptance as the basis of political geography, it is no longer widespread, nor does it appear capable of providing an adequate framework for a systematic branch of geography.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Hartshorne, himself has severely criticised the concept of 'political geography as the morphological study of the state, and has called for a more 'functional' approach.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, there remains an aspect of traditional thought on the nature of the field which has, perhaps undeservedly, received little examination: That is the view which defines political geography in terms of the study of the state. Concentration upon the state, which is only one manifestation of political activities, whether in terms of its composition or its territorial expression, has tended to lead to the overlooking of other relevant topics for study. It also ignores the implications of definitions of geography as a whole.

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<sup>1</sup>Peter Haggett, Locational Analysis in Human Geography, London, 1965, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>See Ibid., pp. 10-12. Haggett uses the term 'deviation' to refer to the main departures from the methodological concept of geography as areal differentiation.

<sup>3</sup>See the criticism above.

<sup>4</sup>Richard Hartshorne, "The Functional Approach in Political Geography," Annals of the Association of American Geographers, Vol. 40 (1950), pp. 95-130.



In accordance with orthodox modern statements concerning the nature and scope of geography,<sup>1</sup> political geography, as a systematic field, has been defined as:

. . . the study of the variation of political phenomena from place to place in interconnection with variations in other features of the earth as the home of man.<sup>2</sup>

Such a definition is consistent with the common view of geography as a whole, and clearly suggests a wider range of concern than the traditional preoccupation with the state.

The present study adopts this view as its conceptual base, and proceeds to examine the interaction between selected political and economic phenomena in a particular place. Thus, there is an explicit concern with political process, rather than political morphology, which has often been lacking in studies in political geography.<sup>3</sup> The study of the relationship between two variables, with one as a causal factor, finds many parallels in other areas of geography, including for example, studies of climate and crop yields, or distance and the location of economic activities. Cohen has recently suggested that there is scope for a 'geography of

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<sup>1</sup>See Hartshorne, Perspective on the Nature of Geography, op. cit., passim.

G. De Jong, Chorological Differentiation as the Fundamental Principle of Geography: An Inquiry into the Chorological Conception of Geography, Groningen, 1962, passim.

<sup>2</sup>Hartshorne, "Political Geography in the Modern World," Journal of Conflict Resolution, Vol. 4 (1960), p. 52.

<sup>3</sup>There is a widespread feeling that geographers, in general, have neglected the process content of areas. See: Edward A. Ackerman, Geography as a Fundamental Research Discipline, University of Chicago, Department of Geography, Research Paper No. 53, Chicago, 1958, p. 18.

Brian J. L. Berry, "Approaches to Regional Analysis: A Synthesis," Annals of the Association of American Geographers, Vol. 54 (1964), pp. 10-11.

Hartshorne, Perspective on the Nature of Geography, op. cit., p. 19.







policy,<sup>1</sup> a potential field which would appear to be concerned with subjects similar to the one explored here - the effect of policy on economic activity.

In the present case, concern is with the action of British colonial policy upon the economy of the Gold Coast, during the period of formal British rule over that territory. Between 1902<sup>2</sup> and 1957, the initial and terminal dates of British rule over the whole of the Gold Coast,<sup>3</sup> the colonial policy of Great Britain changed substantially. With such change, the political impact of Britain upon the Gold Coast economy also altered. An attempt has been made to suggest the force of this 'impact' in different periods, and to determine the degree to which the economy of modern Ghana owes its character to the effects of colonial rule.

Part I of the study, consisting of Chapters 2, 3 and 4, is intended to provide a cross-section of the study area at the beginning of the twentieth century, on the eve of British rule. The cross-section is divided into three basic elements, the first dealing with the development and nature

<sup>1</sup>Saul B. Cohen, "Toward a Geography of Policy," Economic Geography, Vol. 42 (1966), Guest Editorial.

<sup>2</sup>The decision to incorporate the separate parts of the Gold Coast into a colonial unit, and to extend British rule over the whole country, was made in 1901, but the necessary legislation did not become effective until the beginning of 1902.

<sup>3</sup>Contrary to current fashion, the name 'Gold Coast', rather than 'Ghana', has been used when reference is to the pre-independence period. Modern Ghana, as opposed to an ancient state of the Western Sudan, did not exist before 1957.



of British interest in the Gold Coast, the second with the broad content of British imperial expansion in the late nineteenth century - and the Gold Coast's place within it - and the third with the nature of the Gold Coast economy.

Part II, which consists of Chapters 5 and 6, is concerned with the manner in which British colonial policy affected the economy of the Gold Coast. An attempt is made to represent policy, in relation to the Gold Coast, as a composite phenomenon which depended not only on the pattern of events in that territory, but also upon developments within the Empire as a whole, and upon circumstances within the metropolitan country. Each of these factors, though never operating independently of the others, helped to shape the changing British concept of empire, and contributed to the formulation of the policies which implemented the philosophical principles of colonialism. It is customary to regard British imperial policy as a highly pragmatic assortment of administrative 'rules of thumb', a view which tends to under-estimate the importance of theoretical considerations. In the case of the Gold Coast, the objectives of British rule changed with time, but there were objective principles in any one period, even if sometimes ill-defined, and they inevitably influenced economic, and other aspects, of administrative policy. Neither the principles nor the policies of British rule can be neglected in assessing its effect upon the Gold Coast economy.





PART

ONE





## CHAPTER II

### THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF BRITISH JURISDICTION AS DEFINED IN 1901

The beginning of the twentieth century is more than a convenient historical datum for this study. In the Gold Coast it marked the formal inclusion of the territories of modern Ghana - with the exception of British Togoland<sup>1</sup> - in the political unit known as the Gold Coast Colony and Protectorate. Simultaneously, there occurred the abandonment of Britain's traditional vacillating policy, in that area of West Africa, in favour of one based upon a firm declaration of intent and constitutional definition of her jurisdiction. The component territories of the Gold Coast were grouped together into one unit by Orders in Council, which were framed in 1901 and became effective from the 1st January, 1902.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The United Kingdom Trusteeship of Togoland, a ward of the League of Nations and, later, the United Nations, joined the Gold Coast territories in 1957 to become part of the independent state of Ghana.

<sup>2</sup>Ashanti Order in Council, 26 September, 1901.  
Northern Territories Order in Council, 26 September, 1901.  
Gold Coast Order in Council, 26 September, 1901.

All three ordinances are quoted in G. E. Metcalfe, Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History, 1807-1957, London, 1964, pp. 521-525.



The relevant Orders in Council, three in number, announced the annexation of Ashanti and the Protected Territories (which became part of the Colony), approved the declaration of a Protectorate over the Northern Territories, and established the constitutional status of all three regions.<sup>1</sup> Partly for convenience and partially in recognition of the historical differences between the territories, particularly as manifested in their varying relationships with Great Britain,<sup>2</sup> legal provision was also made for the establishment of a tripartite administrative structure. Thus, from the beginning of 1902, the Gold Coast consisted of three administratively distinct but politically connected parts: The Gold Coast Colony, Ashanti, and the Northern Territories.

Ashanti was defined, by the appropriate Order in Council, as the area bounded to the north by the eighth parallel of north latitude; to the south by the northern-most extent of the Colony; to the east by the "frontier" with German Togo, between 8° North and a point on the left bank of the Volta due west of the village of Knobo; and to the west by the "frontier"

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<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>After a century of intermittent struggle between Ashanti, on the one hand, and Britain and the Coastal peoples, on the other, Ashanti had been militarily subjugated. British involvement with the Northern Territories was, however, a product of inter-European rivalries in West Africa in the late nineteenth century, and did not require military operations against the northern peoples. These differences carried administrative implications.

See David Kimble, A Political History of Ghana: The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism, 1850-1928, Oxford, 1963, pp. 322-329.







with French territory, from a point 1000 metres south of Aburuferasi to 8° North. The term frontier means a boundary zone rather than a boundary line, and, in view of the painstaking efforts to settle boundary disagreements with both French and Germans during the 1890's, its use in 1901 was perhaps not very opportune. Nevertheless, the extent of Ashanti was clearly defined. Within the annexed territory, the Governor of the Gold Coast was to have absolute authority to administer, tax, and judge the people. His was also the responsibility to appoint, assign and dismiss civil servants and judicial officers. In turn, the Governor owed allegiance to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.<sup>1</sup>

Inland of Ashanti, the Northern Territories Protectorate was delimited according to the boundaries with the French territories to the west and north, with German Togo to the east, and with Ashanti to the south. Although technically different in status from the two annexed regions, the northern Protectorate was accorded an administrative structure identical with that of Ashanti.<sup>2</sup> Unlike Ashanti and the Northern Territories, however, the Colony, lying to the south of Ashanti and comprising the remainder of the Gold Coast, had its own Legislative Council.<sup>3</sup> Laws enacted by that body

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<sup>1</sup>Ashanti Order in Council, op. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Northern Territories Order in Council, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup>The Council had been in continuous existence since 1874.

See Martin Wight, The Gold Coast Legislative Council, London, 1947, p. 18.



related only to the Colony.<sup>1</sup>

One important outcome of the consolidation of British authority effected by the Orders in Council was that, for the first time in the history of British interest in the Gold Coast, all of the parties concerned - including both governed and governing - could be sure of their legal status. The manner in which problems resulting from previous uncertainty, in this respect, were thus resolved was not, however, especially welcome to either traditional African authorities or the growing elite of educated 'modern' Africans. On the other hand, it was eminently satisfactory for the local colonial administrators. Their task of government was better defined and rendered simpler by the legislation of 1901. The three constitutional ordinances swept away the former complicated system of inter-locking sovereignties, based upon ambiguous treaties of protection and friendship, and upon simple custom, and established a definitive British paramountcy. Questions related to the legitimacy of British actions in certain areas, which had persistently tormented the Colonial Office and the Gold Coast Government during the nineteenth century, thus became obsolete, leaving the Governor and his officials free to govern as they, and the Colonial Secretary in London, thought fit.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>William Tordoff, Ashanti Under the Prempehs, 1888-1935, London, 1965, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup>Both Chamberlain [Secretary of State for the Colonies] and successive Governors thought this a crucial point.

See Kimble, op. cit., Chapter 8.





The Orders in Council obviously held different implications for the peoples of the Gold Coast, although their reactions varied. The declaration of a Protectorate over the Northern Territories, the most primitive region of the country, was essentially non-controversial, and did not attract local opposition.<sup>1</sup> Like France, Britain had earlier prepared the way for her penetration of the West African interior by negotiating a host of protective treaties with small tribal states, and difficulties had been few. The main obstacle to British penetration had been French rivalry, which ended with the Anglo-French agreement on the boundaries to their respective spheres of influence in 1898.<sup>2</sup> Hence, the Order in Council relating to the Northern Territories merely placed the numerous British treaties on a collective basis. British protection, moreover, offered the northern peoples a measure of security against the slave-raiding bands operating in the Sudan zone,<sup>3</sup> still further to the north, and against renewal of the traditional Ashanti domination.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 323-324.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter 3, below, pp. 61-62.

<sup>3</sup>See Tordoff, op. cit., pp. 94-95.

<sup>4</sup>Most of the states in the Northern Territories were tributaries of the Ashanti Confederation. In the late nineteenth century, as at other times, many of them seized the opportunity provided by civil war and weak government in Ashanti to declare themselves independent. Their independence, however, was unlikely to survive the recovery of Ashanti power.

See ibid., Chapters 1 and 2.





The annexation order relating to Ashanti also met with a pacific response, although that was due not to its popularity but to it being the official conclusion of a train of events initiated several years earlier, and effectively ended in 1900. Basically, the future of the inland federation of Ashanti states, which had been a powerful factor in West African affairs for two centuries,<sup>1</sup> was determined in 1896, when Ashanti was obliged to accept Protectorate status under the British Crown.<sup>2</sup> The extension of British 'protection' occurred at a time when Ashanti was particularly weak, following years of civil war and internal upheaval, and was not militarily contested. Further weakening of the Confederacy was caused by the arrest and removal from Ashanti of the Asantehene - King of Ashanti - and a number of his family and advisors. Without its constitutional head, the federate structure of Ashanti was subject to considerable strain. Traditionally, the Asantehene was required to hold the delicate balance of power between the Kumasi chiefs and those of

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<sup>1</sup>The Ashanti Confederacy was formed in the later part of the seventeenth century. It was based upon Kumasi, whose King was also King of the Confederacy, and initially included a number of states within a forty-mile radius of the capital: By the early part of the nineteenth century, the Confederation also ruled over about twenty tributary states - which were part of the Ashanti Empire rather than the Confederacy itself.

See ibid., pp. 1-28.

Ivor Wilks, "The Northern Factor in Ashanti History," Journal of African History, Vol. 2 (1961), pp. 25-34.

Wilham Tordoff, "The Ashanti Confederacy," Journal of African History, Vol. 3 (1962), pp. 399-417.

<sup>2</sup>See Kimble, op. cit., Chapter 7.

Tordoff, Ashanti Under the Prempehs, 1885-1935, op. cit., Chapter 1.





the outlying federated states.<sup>1</sup> His removal destroyed the basis of centralized authority, which, in turn, released powerful centrifugal forces tending towards fragmentation of the Confederacy.

In the uneasy years which followed 1896, the Gold Coast Government - working through an official Resident placed in Kumasi - sought to encourage the process of political de-centralization in Ashanti.<sup>2</sup> The normal administrative structure was undermined by Government directive, and each component state made responsible for the conduct of its own affairs. Fresh demands upon the Ashantis, including one for the delivery of the sacred Golden Stool - symbol of the Ashanti Union<sup>3</sup> - led to a rebellion in 1900, which was quelled by the end of the year.<sup>4</sup> With the final defeat came the end of any remaining hope for the recovery of independence. Not surprisingly, then, the legal arrangements made in the following year for the future administration of Ashanti provoked no controversy; the final campaign had already been lost.

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<sup>1</sup>Tordoff, Ashanti Under the Prempehs, op. cit., pp. 1-15.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 82-83.

<sup>3</sup>For discussion see ibid., p. 99.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 101-109.

A long, comprehensive and almost contemporary account of the rising is given in W. Walton Claridge, A History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti, Vol. 2, 2nd, ed., London; 1964, pp. 425-566.





Nevertheless, the British annexation was certainly not welcomed. Sir Matthew Nathan, upon assuming his position as Governor of the Gold Coast in 1901, was moved to comment upon the recent troubles in Ashanti in the following manner:

I should say that the real origin of the rising is a profound dislike on the part of the Chiefs and leading people of Ashanti to British rule. This dislike is not unnatural. We take away from them all they care about and give them in place conditions of life which have no attractions to them.<sup>1</sup>

A more retrospective viewpoint is provided by Kimble:

The revolt was the last, unsuccessful attempt of the Ashantis to assert by force the right of their traditional State to survive as a national unit in the modern world. Their impetus was exhausted in this final struggle with the British; and although they could never be said to have acquiesced voluntarily in alien rule, yet during the first part of the twentieth century Ashanti, unlike the Colony, was notable for the absence of any resistance to specific administrative actions and decisions.<sup>2</sup>

Circumstances were quite different in the area to the south of Ashanti, where British influence had long compromised the sovereignty of the coastal states. The relationship with Britain was not totally unwanted, since the historical alternative was subservience to Ashanti, but the annexation of 1901 was more binding than the local peoples desired. It replaced the flexible status of Protectorate, previously held by most of the coastal states, with that of Crown Colony. In practical terms, however, the significance of the legislation

<sup>1</sup>Confidential Dispatch, 19 March, 1901, from Nathan to Chamberlain [The Secretary of State for the Colonies], CO/96/378, quoted in G. E. Metcalfe, op. cit., pp. 518-519.

<sup>2</sup>Kimble, op. cit., p. 322.



of 1901 was perhaps more apparent than real. Although it changed the constitutional position of the coastal area, the Order in Council could not notably affect the nature of British administrative practice. The problems of governing a Protectorate were little different from those associated with a Colony, despite the subtle distinctions drawn by Colonial Office lawyers in London, and generations of Gold Coast Governors had acted accordingly, in the British empirical tradition. Unfortunately, from their viewpoint, the legal niceties involved were not overlooked by Africans,<sup>1</sup> who successfully resisted dubiously legal impositions such as direct taxation.<sup>2</sup> In 1897 a local African newspaper phrased the pertinent question: "Colony or Protectorate - Which?"<sup>3</sup> The answer was supplied four years later.

The origin of the confusion over the legitimacy of Britain's status in the Gold Coast, which was finally

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<sup>1</sup>For example, James Aggerrey, King of Cape Coast (1865-1867), challenged what he believed to be circumscription of his authority by the Governor, and was deposed and deported for his pains. Nevertheless, his case was strong. See Kimble, ibid., pp. 201-220.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Chapters 4 and 8.

Also see Letter of 26 May, 1899, from Kings and Chiefs of the Western Province to Chamberlain, CO/96/352, quoted in Kimble, op. cit., p. 312. The petition argued that any attempt to impose direct taxation without popular consent was unconstitutional.

<sup>3</sup>The Gold Coast Methodist Times, 30 April, 1897, quoted in Kimble, op. cit., p. 313.







resolved in 1901,<sup>1</sup> lay in the haphazard manner in which her interests had been gradually acquired and expanded. Until 1821 the British Government had no direct contact with the country. Trade and related activities were managed by a series of chartered monopoly companies before 1750,<sup>2</sup> and from that date by the 'Company of Merchants Trading to Africa',<sup>3</sup> a non-commercial association. The latter, though a corporate organisation composed of merchants, was prohibited from engaging in commerce, and its main task was to administer and maintain the system of forts and factories required by traders along the West African coast. The Company of Merchants, like its predecessors, paid 'ground rent' to the states upon whose land the various forts and other constructions were built.<sup>4</sup>

When, in 1821, the Company was liquidated, and its functions and properties appropriated by the British Crown, the Gold Coast Settlements were constituted as dependencies

<sup>1</sup>i.e. by the Gold Coast Order in Council that year.

<sup>2</sup>The last, and most famous, was the Royal African Company, which was disbanded in 1750. Its chartered monopoly of trade with the African continent was considered to be unnecessary and undesirable.

See Metcalfe, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Details of the constitution of the Company of Merchants are to be found in ibid., Appendix A.

<sup>4</sup>Evidence of James Swanzy (member of the Committee of the Company of Merchants, 1813-1816) before the Select Committee on African Forts, 1816, quoted in Metcalfe, op. cit., p. 35.

[The 'Select Committee' was a Parliamentary Commission.]



of the Colony of Sierra Leone.<sup>1</sup> However, payments of ground rent for the Settlements continued to be made.<sup>2</sup> Magistrates were appointed to uphold British law within the confines of the Settlements, but their jurisdiction did not extend outside them.<sup>3</sup> Hence, Crown rule was very limited in scope; upon this occasion, it was also short-lived. By 1828 the Settlements did not appear to be worth the trouble and expense of their upkeep, so they were returned to merchant control.<sup>4</sup>

Under the administration of a resident Council of Merchants, of which the President was Captain George Maclean, British magistrates continued to be responsible for the maintenance of law inside the Settlements. During the 1830's, however, it became common for Africans to ask Maclean to adjudicate in legal disputes beyond the limits of the Settlements, in the surrounding areas.<sup>5</sup> Although without legal

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<sup>1</sup>An Act Abolishing the African Company, and Transferring to and Vesting in His Majesty all the Forts, Possessions and Property now belonging to or held by them [sic] [7 May, 1821], quoted in Metcalfe, op. cit., pp. 65-67.

<sup>2</sup>See discussion of this topic in Communication from S. Cock [Chairman of the defunct Committee of the Company of Merchants] to Earl Bathurst [Secretary of State for the Colonies], 29 June, 1821, quoted ibid., pp. 67-68.

<sup>3</sup>Kimble, op. cit., p. 193.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 193-194.

G. E. Metcalfe, Maclean of the Gold Coast: The Life and Times of George Maclean, 1801-1847, London, 1962, passim.







foundation, the resulting system of law enforcement was tantamount to an extension of British sovereignty, and provided a firm basis for the development of a Protectorate in the southern Gold Coast.<sup>1</sup> Maclean's informal role was consolidated in 1843, when the Crown resumed control of the Settlements, by his appointment as Judicial Assessor for the areas in which he had worked.<sup>2</sup>

British authority in the coastal areas was further reinforced in 1844 by the signing of a document known as the 'Bond'.<sup>3</sup> A number of Fanti states were partners to this agreement with Britain, which, essentially, authorised the existing but informal jurisdiction of Britain, and guaranteed the Fantis protection. Thus, the Bond legalised the work of Maclean, without, however, undermining the remaining independence of the signatory Fanti states, which regarded the agreement as an insurance against Ashanti aggression.<sup>4</sup> The Bond was, perhaps, most important in that it gave the Gold Coast Government a legitimate basis, however flimsy, for its subsequent virtual claim to sovereignty throughout much of the southern part of the country.

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<sup>1</sup>See Wight, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Declaration of the Fante [sic] Chiefs (The 'Bond), 6 March, 1844, quoted in Metcalfe, Great Britain and Ghana . . . . . op. cit., p. 196.

<sup>4</sup>See Kimble, op. cit., p. 195.



Between 1850 and 1866 the Gold Coast Forts and Settlements were administered as a separate colonial unit, but from 1866 to 1874 they were again governed as a dependency of Sierra Leone. In 1874, finally, the Gold Coast was designated a Crown Colony, to which Lagos was attached until 1886, and provided with a Governor and Legislative and Executive Councils.<sup>1</sup> Despite the change in nomenclature, the Gold Coast, in 1874, still " . . . consisted of several scattered Forts and Settlements along the coast, with a largely undefined sphere of influence stretching towards Ashanti."<sup>2</sup> Crown title to the Forts and Settlements was, by then, uncontested but no-one knew how far the sphere of influence extended, or what it involved. Since 1844, Britain had increased the scope and extent of her activities in the Protected Territories, adjacent to the Forts and Settlements, and the Gold Coast Government was ready to claim a much greater degree of authority than that granted by the Bond.

Aided by the moral justification earned from Britain's defence of the coastal peoples during the 'Sagrenti' War with Ashanti,<sup>3</sup> British influence continued to expand after 1874.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., Chapters 5 and 8.

Wight, op. cit., pp. 17-19.

<sup>2</sup>Kimble, op. cit., p. 301.

<sup>3</sup>The 'Sagrenti' War, of 1873-1874, ended with Sir Garnet Wolseley burning Kumasi, capital of Ashanti. This was the first serious defeat inflicted by the British upon Ashanti, and it sparked off years of internal strife within Ashanti. The War was directly due to the threat to the Protected Territories by the armies of Ashanti.

See Metcalfe, op. cit., p. 347.







It was sometimes formally endorsed by Gold Coast legislation - as in the case of the Ordinance of 1874 which emancipated domestic slaves in the Protected Territories<sup>1</sup> - but often the extension of British jurisdiction was merely subject to a simple test of trial-and-error. The Government of the Gold Coast tended to consider legitimate any precedent which was unsuccessfully, or ineffectively, opposed. Thus, adjustments to the Criminal Code could be safely made because they were likely to be obscure, and because few Africans were interested in technical details of the legal apparatus. On the other hand, British attempts to institute direct taxation and land tenure regulations were of concern to everyone, and were consistently rejected.<sup>2</sup>

In general, the Colonial Office played an inconspicuously neutral role in such affairs, tending to support the introduction of individual measures of wide interest, including attempts to eradicate domestic slavery and similar institutions, but restraining the local Government from extending its jurisdiction on a broad front. One issue upon which the Colonial Office remained adamantly opposed to the Government of the Colony until the end of the Century, was the proposal to expand British territory. It was, however, a perennial issue which a long succession of Governors and

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<sup>1</sup>See Kimble, op. cit., p. 303.

<sup>2</sup>See ibid., Chapter 8.

Wight, op. cit., pp. 21-27.



Colonial Secretaries never lost sight of for long. In 1895 the current Gold Coast Administration attempted to abolish the distinction between the Colony - Forts and Settlements - and the Protected Territories, by local legislation, and subsequently argued that the Colony had thereby grown to include the whole area south of Ashanti. The legality of the manoeuvre was, however, successfully contested by Colonial Office lawyers, who maintained that the status of the Protected Territories was unchanged, since alteration required legislation by the United Kingdom Government.<sup>1</sup>

This and other problems of definition were finally settled in 1901, when the Gold Coast Order in Council removed any remaining " . . . uncertainties by annexing all territories south of Ashanti hitherto unannexed."<sup>2</sup> Although nationalist organisations, notably the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society, subsequently denied the validity of the Order in Council,<sup>3</sup> there could no longer be doubt that the Protected Territories would be governed as part of a Crown Colony.

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<sup>1</sup>Kimble, op. cit., p. 314.

<sup>2</sup>Wight, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>3</sup>On the rather unrealistic grounds that annexation could not supersede the earlier treaties offering 'protection.'

See Kimble, op. cit., p. 327.







All three of the Gold Coast's regions - the Colony, Ashanti and the Northern Territories - crossed the threshold of the twentieth century under the unifying force of British rule, which was greater than the encouragement to fragmentalism provided by administrative de-centralization.<sup>1</sup> However arbitrary the delimitation of boundaries with other colonial territories, it is not at all clear that the Gold Coast should be considered an artificial colonial unit, as it is now fashionable to do. Tribal groups were divided by international boundaries, but it may well be that the resultant weakening of tribalism promoted the development of nationalism, and ultimately the modern state of Ghana. The serious nature of conflict between tribal and national loyalties is only too common a phenomenon in many parts of the modern world to require elaboration. If the presence of British rule gave different tribes of the Gold Coast a common bond - whether through British policy or through a united opposition to it - then it is conceivable that colonial status led to a national unity which would otherwise have been more difficult to obtain. It is also conceivable that domination and rule by Ashanti, the most likely alternative to European dominion, could have led to a delimitation of international boundaries scarcely less 'arbitrary' than those which in fact appeared. The intricate pattern of local cultural affiliation can rarely be satisfactorily accommodated by a large state.

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<sup>1</sup>See ibid., pp. 327-329.



### CHAPTER III

#### THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GOLD COAST COLONY AND PROTECTORATE

Following almost a century of official indecision over the future of the British West African settlements and possessions, apart from the notable exception of Sierra Leone,<sup>1</sup> British authority in the Gold Coast territories was firmly, and definitively, established early in the twentieth century. The Orders in Council which legalised the constitutional and administrative arrangements for the Gold Coast also served to endorse the British commitment to a new and more vigorous policy towards the country. In future, it was made clear, the local Administration<sup>2</sup> would have the incentive to good

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<sup>1</sup>For one reason or another, Sierra Leone was usually regarded as being rather special. For example, the Select Committee of 1865 recommended the adoption of a West African policy which would ultimately enable Britain to withdraw from all of her territories in that area, except Sierra Leone.

See Resolutions of the Select Committee on Africa (Western Coast), 26 June, 1865, in G. E. Metcalfe, Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History, 1807-1957, London, 1964, pp. 311-312.

<sup>2</sup>Throughout the thesis, the term 'local Administration' has been used to refer to the Government of the Gold Coast. This is also true of the terms 'Administration', 'Colonial Government' and 'Gold Coast Government'.







government of knowing that British withdrawal was no longer possible, and that its efforts to aid the country's development would not be judged by financial cost alone.<sup>1</sup>

It is the purpose of the present chapter to consider why, and under what circumstances, the decisions to extend, consolidate and formally define British rule were made. The approach to this problem has been shaped by several factors, but particularly by the knowledge that the Gold Coast was neither a large nor a vital area of Imperial interest. A second point of significance is that British expansion in that territory was coincidental, in time, with expansion elsewhere, in West Africa, in Africa as a whole, and in other parts of the world. These two considerations suggest that in addition to studying the immediate causes of the Gold Coast's annexation - and the pseudo-annexation which declamation of the Northern Territories amounted to - there is a need to attempt to place them in a wider context. Hence, Imperial affairs and British domestic politics are examined in detail, separately and together with their relevance to the Gold Coast.

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<sup>1</sup>A good example of the Government's position is provided by Chamberlain's speech, as Secretary of State for the Colonies, to the House of Commons in 1901. He hoped for new levels of material wealth and civilisation throughout the Empire, but was particularly anxious to vindicate the Government's handling of Ashanti.

See Chamberlain, House of Commons, 18 March, 1901, Hansard, 4/91/349 ff, in Metcalfe, op. cit., pp. 514-518.





IMPERIAL POLICIES AND THE COLONIAL EMPIRE  
IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Students of historical affairs have usually regarded the period from about 1870 to 1900 - with slightly varying opinions over its precise beginning - as an era without real parallel in the history of European colonialism.<sup>1</sup> It was during those thirty years that the so-called 'Scramble' for colonies occurred, and

. . . Europeans expanded their colonial empires by over ten million square miles and nearly one hundred and fifty million people - about a fifth of the world's land area and perhaps a tenth of its population at the time. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Much of the territory annexed during that period was in Africa, and West Africa, itself, was the arena for notable European rivalry. Indeed, the more positive brand of British imperialism operative in the Gold Coast during the last two decades of the nineteenth century appears to have been, in part, a reaction to the increased intensity of European competition for West African territory.<sup>3</sup> French policy, in particular, spurred on Britain to consolidate her interests in the area.

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<sup>1</sup>Of the later part of the period, Madden has said that there was ". . . a flamboyant 'jingo' imperialism strangely uncharacteristic of British 'thinking on empire' . . . ."

See A. F. Madden, "Changing Attitudes and Widening Responsibilities, 1895-1914," The Cambridge History of the British Empire, Vol. 3, Chapter 10, Cambridge, 1959, p. 339.

This work is hereafter referred to as Camb. Hist. Br. Emp.

<sup>2</sup>Harrison M. Wright, The "New Imperialism": Analysis of Late Nineteenth-Century Expansion, Boston, 1961, p. vii.

<sup>3</sup>This point of view is clearly expressed in J. L. Garvin, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, Vol. 3, 1895-1900, London, 1934, Chapter 55.





It has been common to regard this apparent European obsession with territorial acquisition as a unified field of imperial activity, rather than as a series of unrelated annexations. Various theories have, as a result, been proposed to explain late nineteenth century imperialism. Concern in each case is not with accounting for individual situations, but with identifying primary causal factors. A common point of agreement, for the various interpretations, is that the Western Powers - the inclusion of Russia appears to be optional<sup>1</sup> - had attained a critical stage in both their internal development and relations with one another. The precise nature of this crisis has not, however, been a subject of unanimity. Whereas, for example, some theorists have postulated that it was due to the rivalry of ascendant nationalisms, a larger group has asserted the primacy of economic factors.

In 1902, Hobson published a work which was, at once, a pioneer study of imperialism and a formalisation of the concept of 'economic imperialism.'<sup>2</sup> Hobson is credited with having changed the usual connotation of the term, and with having

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<sup>1</sup>Hobson regarded Russian expansion as a special and 'abnormal' case, whereas Lenin stated that he had omitted reference to his own country in order to circumvent Czarist censorship.

<sup>2</sup>J. A. Hobson, Imperialism: A Study, London, 1902.

Reference here is generally to the 1938 revised edition of this work, so long as the text is unaltered from the original. Where there are changes, however, reference has been made to the extensive excerpts from the 1902 edition which are quoted in Wright, op. cit.



given it its modern meaning.<sup>1</sup> Koebner has demonstrated, however, that the idea of economic interests occasionally being involved in imperial affairs had been current for a number of years, reaching wide acceptance during the South African War.<sup>2</sup> Hobson's thesis was therefore introduced to a public mind familiar with some of its content, and receptive to many of its ideas. The suspicion that financial intrigues were at the root of the South African War was widely-held, and contributed to the popularity of Hobson's views on imperialism.<sup>3</sup>

Hobson argued that though unnecessary and unprofitable, for the nation, imperialism persisted. Rather than attribute this to accident or consistent human error, he looked for a more positive cause. A major part of his argument was that there were certain sections of society which did profit from imperial ventures, and they were influential enough to be able to promote their own interests regardless of the national good. In particular, financial groups with overseas investments were likely to benefit, and Hobson maintained that the primary motive for colonial expansion was the urge to

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<sup>1</sup>D. K. Fieldhouse, "Imperialism": An Historiographical Revision," Economic History Review, Second Series, Vol. 14 (1961-1962), pp. 187-209.

<sup>2</sup>Richard Koebner, "The Concept of Economic Imperialism," Economic History Review, Second Series, Vol. 2 (1949), pp. 1-29.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.







provide maximum possible security for such assets. This objective was especially important in the late nineteenth century when financiers held large accumulations of surplus capital which they preferred to invest overseas, where profit rates were higher.

It followed, according to Hobson's argument, that those financial concerns with funds invested in independent, undeveloped parts of the world would have a keen interest in such territories being annexed by their own government. On the one hand, annexation would ensure a higher level of investment security, whilst retaining the more lucrative interest rates associated with 'risk' capital, and, on the other, it would potentially, at least, afford many advantages not available to foreign rivals. Conversely, it was important that the home government should appropriate a territory before a rival power could stake a claim, lest the commercial tables be reversed. At a secondary level, economic development, with its attendant further investment opportunities, would be likely to occur sooner and more satisfactorily under the management of a colonial regime rather than under native rulers.

In formulating these views, Hobson considered and rejected a number of popular interpretations of imperialism. For example, he maintained that imperial policies brought little commercial reward to the nation as a whole. Contrary to the conclusions which might be drawn from the vast expenditure of 'blood and money' to secure foreign and colonial



markets, overseas trade, particularly with the new colonies, had been grossly exaggerated in value.<sup>1</sup> While Hobson can be criticised for unduly minimising the significance of 'visible' exports in the British economy, especially in view of the persistent deficit in the balance of trade over the last 150 years,<sup>2</sup> he was undoubtedly correct in attacking rather vague contemporary notions of the commercial value of the new tropical colonies.

Generally, they were relatively unproductive of commercial commodities, with the exception of the mining areas, and their possession rarely afforded Britain exclusive trade privileges.<sup>3</sup> The absence of tariff barriers throughout the colonies, other than those which were self-governing, meant that German, American and Japanese competitors were all on an equal footing with British manufacturers and export merchants. Similarly, colonial products tended to find the most lucrative markets, which were not necessarily within Britain.

To add support to his case, Hobson also argued that British trade with the colonies was declining, relative to

<sup>1</sup>Hobson, op. cit., 1938, Chapter 2.

Idem in Wright, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

<sup>2</sup>Albert H. Imlah, "British Balance of Payments and Export of Capital, 1816-1913," Economic History Review, Second Series, Vol. 5 (1952), p. 210.

<sup>3</sup>William L. Langer, "A Critique of Imperialism," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 14 (1935), pp. 104-105.







that with the rest of the world.<sup>1</sup> The data upon which this view was based were drawn from a Board of Trade publication.<sup>2</sup> Fieldhouse has disputed the accuracy of the statistical evidence for Hobson's case, and maintains that, proportionally, imperial trade was growing in the late nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Thus:

. . . British exports to the empire increased from 24 per cent to 33.6 per cent of total British trade between 1870-2 and 1890-2, and imports from 21.9 per cent to 22.9 per cent in the same period.<sup>4</sup>

The issue cannot be considered settled, however, for Fieldhouse's challenge is based upon data provided by Cairncross,<sup>5</sup> which are not necessarily accurate and cannot be checked because no mention is made of sources.<sup>6</sup> A more recent work than Cairncross' tends to vindicate Hobson's assertion that imperial trade was relatively declining.

<sup>1</sup>Hobson, 1938, op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>2</sup>Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, CD 1761, "British and Foreign Trade and Industry. Memoranda: Statistical Tables and Charts Prepared in the Board of Trade with Reference to Various Matters Bearing on British and Foreign Trade and Industrial Conditions," 1903.

<sup>3</sup>Fieldhouse, op. cit., p. 190.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>6</sup>Fieldhouse refers to a table in A. K. Cairncross, Home and Foreign Investment, 1870-1913, Cambridge, 1953, p. 189. The table does not bear a source reference.



Thus, Graham says:

There was no disputing the fact that within the markets of the Empire British trade was losing ground. Between 1881 and 1900 British possessions had increased their purchases by 17 per cent; yet British exports to those same colonies had revealed an actual decrease of 1 per cent.<sup>1</sup>

Again, though not so drastic, he estimated that the proportion of British imports from the colonies, compared with total British imports, was, in 1897, 20.8 per cent, " . . . the lowest percentage since 1860."<sup>2</sup> In summary,

. . . the trade between the mother country and her colonies was not increasing at the same rate as the total trade of Great Britain.<sup>3</sup>

Even more significantly, in view of the British economy's heavy reliance upon earnings from foreign investments,<sup>4</sup> the new colonies did not provide important additional markets for finance capital. Imlah has estimated that by 1870 there was an accumulated balance of British investments overseas amounting to almost £700 millions.<sup>5</sup> This compares quite closely with Cairncross' figure of £785 millions.<sup>6</sup> Of this sum, probably about one-third was invested in the

<sup>1</sup>G. S. Graham, "Imperial Finance, Trade, and Communications, 1895-1914," Chapter 12 in Camb. Hist. Br. Emp., op. cit., p. 440.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 440-441.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Imlah, op. cit., p. 210.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 237.

<sup>6</sup>Cairncross, op. cit., pp. 182-183.







Empire.<sup>1</sup> The United States, however, provided the largest single market for British capital,<sup>2</sup> and within the Empire it was India and the self-governing colonies (later known as the 'dominions') which attracted most of the British investment. By 1870, there was more British capital in India than in the whole of the remainder of the Empire.<sup>3</sup>

The broad outline of this pattern changed little during the subsequent forty years. British investment overseas continued to grow rapidly; the Empire did not receive more than half of this capital; and the United States continued to provide the largest market. Within the Empire, however, there were significant adjustments to the direction of capital flows. By 1885, Australia had emerged as the largest colonial attraction for British funds but, towards the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, was in turn superseded by Canada. The development of the Canadian demand for capital helps to explain the growth of the proportion of the British total overseas investment placed in North and South America, together, from 40 per cent in 1885 to over 50 per cent in 1911.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>If the data supplied by Cairncross, loc. cit., is used then the proportion is at least 34.27 per cent. W. K. Hancock, Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs, Vol. 2, pt. 1, London, 1940, has suggested one-sixth. Finally, Anthony Steel, "The British Empire and the United States of America, 1870-1914," Camb. Hist. Br. Emp., op. cit., Chapter 9, p. 300, has estimated one-third.

<sup>2</sup>Steel, op. cit., p. 299.

<sup>3</sup>E. A. Benians, "Finance, Trade and Communications, 1870-1895," Camb. Hist. Br. Emp., op. cit., Chapter 6, p. 197.

<sup>4</sup>Sources the same as those cited in previous paragraph.





It should also be noted that by 1913, 10 per cent of total British foreign and colonial investments were lodged in Argentina.<sup>1</sup>

Segal and Simon have suggested, contrary to Cairncross,<sup>2</sup> that there was not an increasing tendency to invest within the Empire between 1875 and 1894.

Our data fail to support this view. [i.e. that there was] The Empire-share curve displays little if any evidence of a rising trend. This suggests that any patriotic sentiment that existed among the investment decision-makers was overshadowed by yield factors and other considerations.<sup>3</sup>

Their findings did, however, support the view put forward by Nurkse when he stated:

It is clear that the main flow of capital . . . was not to the neediest countries with their 'teeming millions', but to the sparsely peopled areas where conditions for rapid progress along familiar western lines were exceptionally favourable.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout the period 1870-1910 the proportion of British overseas investment capital which flowed to the new colonies was insignificant. Funds obtained by those territories were largely supplied by their governments.<sup>5</sup> Private

<sup>1</sup>A. G. Ford, "The Transfer of British Foreign Lending, 1870-1913," Economic History Review, Second Series, Vol. 11 (1958-1959), p. 305.

<sup>2</sup>Cairncross, op. cit., pp. 182-183.

<sup>3</sup>Harvey H. Segal and M. Simon, "British Foreign Capital Issues, 1865-1894," Journal of Economic History, Vol. 21 (1961), p. 574.

This study is particularly interesting because the use of a computer enabled the authors to make use of more data than would have otherwise been possible.

<sup>4</sup>Ragnar Nurkse, "The Problem of International Investment Today in the Light of Nineteenth-Century Experience," Economic Journal, Vol. 64 (1954), p. 750.

<sup>5</sup>Segal and Simon, op. cit., p. 576.





investors were rarely motivated by considerations other than profit maximisation and investment security, and in these respects the new colonies compared unfavourably with regions elsewhere. Consequently, private capital tended to move towards 'safer' and more lucrative areas of the world.

In times of diplomatic crisis or economic depression, private investment swung towards the relative security of colonial government issues - mainly in the self-governing colonies - and in more favourable periods funds reverted to the more speculative, and higher-yielding, markets in the Americas.<sup>1</sup> Areas similar to West Africa received very little British capital. Thus, although Nigeria, Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast had, between them, borrowed £10 millions by 1914,<sup>2</sup> that sum dwindled in significance when set beside the total British overseas investment of £3,974 millions.<sup>3</sup>

Apart from his criticism of the popular notion that the new colonies were almost priceless commercial assets, Hobson also attacked suggestions that they were essential outlets for Britain's surplus population. It appeared to him that the home country was not over-crowded, that its population would be practically stable by the middle of the century (an accurate forecast), and that the territories acquired after 1870 were, on the whole, likely to prove singularly

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 573.

<sup>2</sup>Graham, op. cit., p. 465.

<sup>3</sup>Imlah, op. cit., p. 239.





unattractive to British emigrants.

No substantial settlement of Britons is taking place in any of the areas of the Empire acquired since 1870, excepting the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony, nor is it likely that any such settlement will take place. The tropical character of most lands acquired under the new Imperialism renders genuine colonisation impossible: there is no true British settlement in these places; a small number of men spend a short broken period in precarious occupations as traders, engineers, missionaries, overseers. The new Empire is even more barren for settlement than for profitable trade.<sup>1</sup>

Despite innovations designed to improve the compatibility of Europeans with the tropics, and with the limited exception of Southern Rhodesia, the situation has not significantly changed since Hobson wrote the above passage. For one reason or another, the mainstreams of European emigration have continued to favour extra-tropical areas for settlement purposes.

Returning to the subject of sectional interests favouring imperial policies, Hobson noted that:

The vast expenditure on armaments, the costly wars, the grave risks and embarrassments of foreign policy, the stoppage of political and social reforms within Great Britain, though fraught with great injury to the nation, have served well the present business interests of certain industries and professions.<sup>2</sup>

Amongst the people to benefit, he included armament manufacturers and suppliers, professional military men, people dealing with certain classes of manufactured goods, and speculative emigrants. Invoking James Mill's comment that

<sup>1</sup>Hobson in Wright, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.





the colonies provided " . . . a vast system of outdoor relief for the upper classes," he also pointed out that institutions such as the Indian Civil Service offered most rewarding employment opportunities to people suitably stationed in life.<sup>1</sup>

Most significant of all, amongst the 'sectional interests', were those rather anonymous, but influential, financial groups so important in the British economy. Clearly, speculative financiers with investments in potential colonies stood to gain a great deal from policies which would protect them, and would also open new markets for capital funds. The ability of powerful economic, and well-organised, pressure groups to sway both public opinion and official policies has not been given the attention it deserves. However, it is becoming increasingly obvious that this aspect of Hobson's views should not be lightly dismissed.<sup>2</sup> As Norris has written:

Lobbying is as old as government, and in England industrial lobbying was well-developed before the beginning of the eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

There is no reason to suppose that financiers are less

<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>One of the earliest studies of the political activities of English pressure groups was made in 1908: A. Lawrence Lowell, The Government of England, New York, 1908. Very little followed this work until the post-1945 period. A good general, and recent, coverage of the nature, techniques and degrees of success obtained by such groups has been provided by J. D. Stewart, British Pressure Groups: Their Role in Relation to the House of Commons, Oxford, 1958.

<sup>3</sup>J. N. Norris, "Samuel Garbett and the Early Development of Industrial Lobbying in Great Britain," Economic History Review, Second Series, Vol. 10 (1957-1958), p. 450.





developed than industrialists in this respect. Indeed, Checkland, in an interesting article on the place of the 'City' in late nineteenth and early twentieth century British politics, has indicated that there was a very close connection between overseas financiers and the Government of the day. "It was well known that Disraeli took his problems to Lionel Rothschild, and Gladstone to Lord Overstone."<sup>1</sup>

Checkland mentions that not only did overseas financiers rule the Bank of England, commercial domestic bankers being prohibited from membership of the controlling Board, but that they were in a uniquely advantageous position to propagate their influence with the Government. It was to such men that Cabinets turned when they wished to obtain advice on the likely effects of economic policies on the state of the economy, and upon its movement. Again, those were the people who were often in the best position to counsel the Government on its conduct of foreign affairs, and even to supply the funds for overseas projects.<sup>2</sup> Thus, Hobson's suspicions were not so ridiculous as some of his critics would have us believe.

Nevertheless, Hobson has not been short of critics, although some of their actual criticism amounts to little

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<sup>1</sup>S. G. Checkland, "The Mind of the City, 1870-1914," Oxford Economic Papers, New Series, Vol. 9 (1957), p. 261.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 261-278.





more than mis-representation. For example, Fieldhouse argues that " . . . he [Hobson] assumes quite arbitrarily that the new colonies had attracted a high proportion of the investment called 'Foreign' or 'Colonial'." <sup>1</sup> It is difficult to accept this charge, which in any case does not constitute a 'basic fault' in the thesis. In the absence of comprehensive statistical coverage for individual territories, Hobson's observations were quite rational and usually markedly restrained. Thus:

From this table [investment figures, p. 52] it appears that the period of energetic Imperialism coincided with a remarkable growth in the income from foreign investments. <sup>2</sup>

Again, Hobson's concern with investment capital and imperial activity was not confined to the new colonies; he was quite explicit in extending his argument to China and other areas which had not been annexed.

A further point is that the size of the investment in a particular territory was not necessarily of great importance. If the thesis that imperialism was prompted by sectional interests, particularly in financial circles, were valid, then those groups would be concerned with protecting all of their investments, not the largest alone. The fact that only a small proportion of British capital funds moved to territories which subsequently became 'new colonies' does

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<sup>1</sup>Fieldhouse, op. cit., p. 190.

<sup>2</sup>Hobson, op. cit., 1938, p. 52.



not invalidate Hobson's case.

More fundamental criticisms of Hobson's work are, perhaps, best left for consideration together with those of other related writings, for it was in the works of others that Hobson's ideas gained greatest intellectual fruition.

Hobson had not quite the mental staying power, the sheer intellectual drive, to allow his remarkable insights to develop into a full theory of imperialism such as Lenin was immediately after him to construct out of a combination of Hobson's work with that of Marx.<sup>1</sup>

Lenin's economic interpretation of the phenomenon of late nineteenth century imperialism was published in 1917.<sup>2</sup> It drew extensively upon Hobson's work,<sup>3</sup> whilst keeping intellectual faith with Marx's belief in the self-destructive potential of capitalism. In Lenin's view, imperialism was a special advanced stage of capitalism's development. Although much of a new socio-economic system, it derived from the obsolescence of the free enterprise economy and its displacement by monopoly capitalism.<sup>4</sup>

The process leading to the emergence of this new social order, and the decline of the old, was alleged to have originated in the growth of monopoly power, and in

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<sup>1</sup>John Strachey, The End of Empire, London, 1959, p. 99.

<sup>2</sup>V. I. Lenin, Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism, Petrograd, 1917. The Eleventh Impression, n. d., issued by the Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, is referred to here.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Preface.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 149-150.







the widespread trend towards economic concentration.

"Economically, the main thing in this process is the displacement of capitalist free competition by capitalist monopoly."<sup>1</sup> Such a trend was increasingly apparent in a number of areas of economic activity, including production, control of raw material resources, banking, finance and control of markets. In each of these fields, the " . . . combines, cartels, syndicates and trusts . . . " of monopoly capitalism had by the 1870's generally become sufficiently powerful to dominate Western economies. Hence, free competition, which was at its zenith between 1840 and 1860, had been superseded by a new economic order, one which was the antithesis of free competition.

As Strachey has commented, Lenin's argument at this point has a firm basis in Marxist ideology.<sup>2</sup> The growth of monopoly and oligopoly, if undisturbed, would have a tendency to undermine the living standards of both basic suppliers and consumers, by preventing the emergence of optimum demand-supply relationships.<sup>3</sup> Eventually, there would come a time when purchasing power at home would have been so impaired as

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>2</sup>Particularly in the sense of capitalism containing 'inherent contradictions.' See Strachey, op. cit., Chapter 6.

<sup>3</sup>At a simple level, this would mean that both farmers and bread-consumers were being relatively, and perhaps absolutely, impoverished by the growing centralized power of middle-men and manufacturers. On a national scale, the suggestion is that monopoly interests were undermining the living standard of the population as a whole.



to virtually prohibit opportunities for expansion in domestic markets. Subsequent growth - of the sale of goods and capital - would therefore have to be directed overseas. This is basically the situation which Lenin believed to have evolved in Western Europe by the mid-1870's.

He noted the approximate coincidence in time, of the emergence of monopoly capitalism as a dominant in economic life with the beginnings of large-scale colonial expansion, and postulated a positive correlation between them. Thus, imperialist capitalism had soon developed from the transitory stage of monopoly capitalism. The cartels and other commercial combines held a deep interest in territorial annexations overseas, for they provided market access and security, and offered the possibility of competitive advantages over foreign rivals.

A number of other arguments in favour of an economic interpretation of late nineteenth century imperialism have been proposed. Hunt considers Rudolph Hilferding's Finanz Kapital (1910) to be a more significant and original work than that of Lenin,<sup>1</sup> while Rosa Luxemburg's Die Akkumulation des Kapitals (1913), though neglected in the English-speaking world, has also added formidable thoughts to Marxist-Leninist theory.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, the Hobson-Lenin version - whose authors

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<sup>1</sup>R. N. Carew Hunt, The Theory and Practice of Communism, 2nd. éd., Harmondsworth, England, 1963, p. 204.

<sup>2</sup>Rosa Luxemburg, The Accumulation of Capital, Trans. by Agnes Schwarzschild, London, 1951.





differed most significantly in that Hobson pleaded the need for social change, whereas Lenin believed the system beyond reform<sup>1</sup> - has stood as the standard 'economic' thesis. Less substantial works have, however, gained their own bodies of followers. Woolf's study, published in 1920, may be regarded as one of these, since it gained recognition as a reasonable exposition of the Fabian attitude.<sup>2</sup>

As might be expected, Woolf's work adopted a moderate stance upon the subject of causation in imperialism, but found sufficient empirical evidence to support the concept of the usual primacy of economic motivation. Less theory-minded than either Hobson or Lenin, Woolf paid attention to the personalities of the 'men with power' and to the immediate circumstances of colonial annexations. His conclusions were consequently less forceful and less singular, and contained a place for the possibility of 'empire for commerce's sake' sometimes changing to 'empire as an end in itself.' On balance, however, this

. . . does not affect the truth of the generalisation that the main and ultimate end of policy during the last fifty years has been economic interests, commercial, industrial and financial.<sup>3</sup>

The weaknesses of theories developing the notion of economic causation have been amply exposed through the years,<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Fieldhouse, op. cit., p. 193.

<sup>2</sup>Leonard S. Woolf, Empire and Commerce in Africa, London, 1920.

<sup>3</sup>Woolf in Wright, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>4</sup>For example: Langer, op. cit.; Fieldhouse, op. cit.; Carlton J. Hayes, A Generation of Materialism, 1871-1900, New York, 1941.





but not always in a convincing manner. The most usual criticism is that an economic interpretation of imperialism does not explain all colonial situations. To no small extent, however, this is a general and permissible limitation of all theories. "In fact, no theory conforms exactly to observed facts."<sup>1</sup> The value of theoretical constructions lies in their representing attempts to isolate not the peculiar features of individual cases, but the common factors to be found in all cases. Hence, the validity of a given generalisation is not to be judged by reference to what may be the superficial uniqueness of one example.

The Hobson-Lenin theory is, perhaps, best viewed as an attempt to identify a causal 'prime-mover', in order to understand the phenomenon of late nineteenth century imperialism. In this light, their work is close to the core of the spirit of scientific inquiry - in the natural and behavioural fields - and it is with this approach that Carr, and others, believes history to be fundamentally concerned. Thus: " . . . History is 'a selective system' not only of cognitive, but of causal, orientations to reality."<sup>2</sup> Strachey expresses, less succinctly, much the same attitude when he says, of the economic causation theory of imperialism, that

Unless we try at least to identify some such prime mover for the modern imperialist process, we shall have to retreat to the safe, respectable, but

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<sup>1</sup>William Bunge, Theoretical Geography, Lund, 1962, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>E. H. Carr, What is History? London, 1964, p. 105.



barren, view that history is an unaccountable jumble of facts and dates without interrelation or interconnections. Naturally, if we accept that view, we may be content to say that the great imperialist heyday just happened and leave it at that.<sup>1</sup>

This may be contrasted with the viewpoint of Fieldhouse, whose criticism of the Hobson-Lenin thesis is not unusual, when he argues that one reason for an historian to be sceptical is because

. . . his instinct is to distrust all-embracing historical formulas which, . . . , seek to explain complex developments in terms of a single dominant influence.<sup>2</sup>

The argument that " . . . the theory simply does not fit the facts of the post-1870 period. . . ." <sup>3</sup> is, however, a rather unrealistic criticism of the economic causation thesis. Economic motives and consequences, direct and indirect, were frequently apparent in association with imperial policies, and should not be lightly dismissed. For example, explanation of the British move into Egypt is customarily based primarily upon Britain's strategic interest in the Suez Canal. Amongst the secondary, and more immediate, factors also drawn upon are the collapse of Khedival government and the inability of the European Powers to agree upon a course of action which would safeguard the Canal.<sup>4</sup> This

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<sup>1</sup>Strachey, op. cit., pp. 123-124.

<sup>2</sup>Fieldhouse, op. cit., p. 195.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>This is essentially a summary of the interpretations made by R. Robinson, J. Gallagher and A. Denny, Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism, London, 1961, p. 463.





interpretation requires extending in order to account for the significance of the Suez Canal, in the first place. At this point, economic considerations must be recognised, for the Canal was believed to be vital to any British scheme for defending India and Far Eastern trade.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the economic factors can only be ignored by conveniently suspending the analysis at the point where they are due to appear.

Nevertheless, it is probable that, in its present form, the debate over the significance of economic motivation in imperialism has contributed as much as it can be expected to do to our understanding of the late nineteenth century. What is now required is that the controversy should be removed from the arena of intelligent speculation, and the thesis properly tested, by other than qualitative means. The prospect of such research is becoming increasingly feasible, as the statistical model-building techniques of the social sciences grow in sophistication. For an earlier period, Mauro, with his colleagues, has already undertaken an exploratory survey of the requirements and difficulties of such a project.<sup>2</sup> Until similar work is organised to deal with the late nineteenth century, there appears to be little possibility of a substantial alternative arising to the theory of economic imperialism.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 157-159.

<sup>2</sup>F. Mauro, "Towards an 'Intercontinental Model': European Overseas Expansion Between 1500 and 1800", Economic History Review, Second Series, Vol. 14 (1961), pp. 1-17.





There are, however, other interpretations which have smaller bodies of advocates. Schumpeter, one of the earliest critics of Hobson and Lenin, admitted that economic factors were of some significance, but maintained that imperialism was essentially a social atavism.<sup>1</sup> The substance of his thesis argued that imperialism cannot be regarded as a product of late-nineteenth century Western economy, because it was present in earlier historical periods. It is, rather, a manifestation of intrinsically aggressive social and psychological patterns of behaviour established in the remote, and uncivilised, past. As such, it antedates the rise of capitalism. Schumpeter defined imperialism as " . . . the objectless disposition on the part of a state to unlimited forcible expansion."<sup>2</sup> He asserted

. . . history shows us nations and classes - most nations furnish an example at some time or other - that seek expansion for the sake of expanding, victory for the sake of winning, dominion for the sake of ruling.<sup>3</sup>

Schumpeter's recurrent theme was that expansion cannot be explained by reference to 'concrete' interests; an attempt upon the part of an expansion-minded nation to demonstrate that they exist is merely the pretext which precipitates

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<sup>1</sup>His work, Imperialism, was published in Germany in 1919 and has only been translated into English quite recently, in 1951. The edition referred to here is J. A. Schumpeter, Imperialism and Social Classes [The title refers to two separate essays, not one as is misleadingly suggested.], London, 1955.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 5.



action. In the background, there is invariably the same 'objectlessness' which has characterised most of the wars ever fought. Thus, he argued, it is a mistake to associate imperialism with capitalism. On the contrary, capitalism had created unprecedented levels of social rationality, through the introduction of new forms of organisation and a resolute economic objectivity, and these had propagated a pacific disposition amongst the peoples of capitalist society. Aggressive imperialist tendencies could, therefore, only be interpreted in terms of the intrusion, or perpetuation, of alien - non-capitalist - factors in modern life. One example, was the survival of autocratic authority, in modified form.

Possibly due to the long delay in translation, Schumpeter's work has been given little consideration in the English-speaking world. Nevertheless, the attitudes adopted by various commentators reveal a perplexing range of opinions. Whereas Wright claims " . . . the argument has . . . become probably the most influential of all the criticisms of the economic interpretation,"<sup>1</sup> Koebner is extremely doubtful whether the essay was worth translating into English.<sup>2</sup> Langer has termed it " . . . an ingenious and highly intelligent essay . . . ." <sup>3</sup>; Fieldhouse mentions it only in

<sup>1</sup>Wright, op. cit., p. xi.

<sup>2</sup>R. Koebner, Review of Imperialism and Social Classes and R. Luxemburg (op. cit.) in Economic History Review, Vol. 4 (1951-52), pp. 403-406.

<sup>3</sup>Langer, op. cit., p. 110.





passing;<sup>1</sup> and Robinson and his co-authors point out that despite being "brilliant", " . . . it has usually been neglected by historians,"<sup>2</sup> and proceed to neglect it further.

Schumpeter's views have also been somewhat harshly indicted by Greene in an aggressive critique.<sup>3</sup> Greene argued that in order to represent capitalism as being 'anti-imperialist', Schumpeter had developed specialised and unjustified definitions of both systems, and subsequently used those definitions to demonstrate that capitalism and imperialism were irreconcilable. However, if his definition of imperialism were to be accepted, and the phenomenon agreed to be 'objectless', then, Greene maintained, we would be left with few examples because most wars have been fought, and territories annexed, on a basis of reasoned objectivity. Similarly, capitalism has a firm basis in the nation-state, within the confines of which it originated, and cannot be considered as a form of organisation independent of national boundaries. Hence, capitalism should not be viewed as inherently anti-aggressive.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the cogency of Greene's reasoning, there is reason to believe that he ignored the main point of Schumpeter's thesis, which was concerned with imperialism

<sup>1</sup>Fieldhouse, op. cit., p. 209.

<sup>2</sup>Robinson, Gallagher and Denny, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>Murray Greene, "Schumpeter's Imperialism - A Critical Note," Social Research: An International Quarterly of Political and Social Science, Vol. 19 (1952), pp. 453-463.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.





as a social atavism. There is a basic flaw in this thesis which does not appear to have been noticed, or, at least, has not received comment. If the theory is valid, and human society does contain an inherited aggressive instinct, then the atavistic factor is either a constant or it fluctuates. In the event that it is a constant, then it can be disregarded as being of no 'historical significance';<sup>1</sup> it is similar to other earthly constants, such as the configuration of the earth's surface,<sup>2</sup> in that changes in it cannot be called upon to account for the ever-changing pattern of human affairs.

On the other hand, if the atavistic factor were a variable, and its fluctuations cause variations in the intensity of the imperial urge, then it still does not allow us to understand, in a significant sense, why the late nineteenth century was witness to large-scale colonial expansion. In other words, instead of having to explain territorial expansion, we should be left with the problem of explaining why the factor which caused that expansion was so powerful in that particular period. There would also be the problems of determining why imperial annexation - instead of simple warfare - should be the manifestation of the atavistic factor, and why expansion was directed into certain areas, particularly

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<sup>1</sup>This argument owes much to a similar one, in a different context, by Carr, op. cit., pp. 87-108.

<sup>2</sup>This is in the sense that changes in the configuration of the earth's surface have usually been over too long a period to cause changes in the conduct of human affairs.



into Africa. The argument thus becomes circular and even if it were valid, which is of course uncertain, Schumpeter's thesis would not be very useful.

However, one point raised by Schumpeter, which has been independently upheld by other critics of the theory of economic imperialism, concerns the stress laid by Hobson and Lenin upon the late nineteenth century. Schumpeter argued that it is a false distinction to separate that period from other eras of territorial expansion, for imperialism has always been present in human society. Those, however, who have regarded the late nineteenth century as special, have not denied earlier periods of colonial expansion. Their main point is that imperialism was a force of unprecedented power in the thirty years from 1870. In order to explain why that should be so, they have postulated that it arose from special circumstances in the metropolitan countries.

Nevertheless, there is much validity in Robinson and Gallagher's case that recognition of the 'New Imperialism', by many historians, has distracted attention from more important features of British imperial history.<sup>1</sup> In particular, they maintain, there was a clear continuity of imperial policy throughout the nineteenth century, but this has been neglected because of the superficial attraction of a spate of formal annexations in the later part of the period. Their

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<sup>1</sup>R. Robinson and J. Gallagher, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," Economic History Review, Second Series, Vol. 6 (1953), pp. 1-15.





argument suggests that the most important aspect of nineteenth century British history " . . . is that it is the history of an expanding society."<sup>1</sup> Imperialism, then, is the process which draws undeveloped parts of the world into contact with such a society, regardless of whether it is manifest in the form of territorial annexation or mere political 'influence'. British nineteenth century policies were consistently geared towards attracting new regions - primarily at an economic level, and secondarily at a cultural level - into contact with the expanding society of Great Britain.

Thus, Robinson and Gallagher consider imperialism to be more than just territorial expansion. In their terms, mid- and late-Victorian times appear not as eras of relative imperial stagnation and growth, but as separate components of general nineteenth century expansion. The crucial distinction between them is that in the later years - for a variety of reasons, but particularly because of competition from the United States, and other European Powers - Britain was increasingly obliged to use annexation as the means of securing objectives which had, earlier, usually been attainable by informal methods.

The fact that informal techniques were more often sufficient for this purpose [the provision of security for British overseas interests] in the circumstances of the mid-century rather than in the later period when the foreign challenge to British supremacy intensified, should not be allowed to disguise the basic continuity of policy.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 12.





Again:

The aims of the mid-Victorians were no more 'anti-imperialist' than their successors', though they were more often able to achieve them informally; and the late-Victorians were no more 'imperialist' than their predecessors, even though they were driven to annex more often.<sup>1</sup>

These views do not explain why annexation became so important after 1870, which is the problem with which theories of imperialism have usually been concerned. However, the Robinson-Gallagher thesis that there was a fundamental continuity in British policy during the nineteenth century is relevant to West Africa. Until the final decade of the century, the British Government showed a consistent aversion towards proposals that the British sphere of interest in the Gold Coast should be formally consolidated. The main criterion for evaluating such recommendations was the probable cost of their implementation to the Treasury.<sup>2</sup> So long as the Gold Coast remained peripheral to the major British interests in Africa, which were Egypt and the southern part of the continent, then it was difficult to justify any increase in administrative costs, or action likely to require increased expenditure.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 12-13.

<sup>2</sup>For example, see communication from Kimberley [Secretary of State for the Colonies] to Ussher [Administrator of the Gold Coast, at a time when it was attached to Sierra Leone], 19 November, 1880, in Metcalfe, op. cit., p. 403.

<sup>3</sup>Robinson, Gallagher and Denny, op. cit., p. 379.



Hence, provided trade could develop under peaceful conditions, and Africans agreed to curb those aspects of their behaviour which Europeans found distasteful, Britain was disinterested in extending her formal commitment to the Gold Coast.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the vague nature of the existing attachment was frequently considered advantageous, since it helped to minimise both expenditure and effort, while giving most of the benefits to be gained from direct annexation. Ashanti proved to be a local flaw in the scheme, constituting what was believed to be an obstacle to security and progress, but the United Kingdom refused to consider it a long-term difficulty. The expedition of 1874, which led to the burning of Kumasi, is more realistically viewed as a gesture of official irritation rather than the advent of a policy change.<sup>2</sup> Britain had no intention, at that time, of assuming the burdensome responsibility for ruling the country, and attempted merely to bring Ashanti into line with the territories to the south.

Foreign rivalry, particularly in the form of French competition, eventually precipitated the adoption of a new official attitude towards the Gold Coast, and other parts of West Africa. At first the change was gradual, mainly involving attempts to define more accurately the respective spheres of interest. It was the need for such efforts which

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<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Metcalfe, op. cit., p. 404.





prompted Governor Griffith, in 1892, to authorise C. E. Ferguson to negotiate commercial treaties with the tribes to the north of Ashanti.<sup>1</sup> The British Government, however, while believing that a Protectorate over Ashanti was necessary, was in 1894 still reluctant to extend its formal responsibilities in the Gold Coast.<sup>2</sup> It was believed that less drastic measures than annexation were adequate to safeguard British interests, and the need to avoid antagonising France and Germany, while more important African issues were still open,<sup>3</sup> tended to inhibit British policy.

A decisive break with the British tradition in West Africa coincided with Chamberlain's appointment to the Colonial Office, in 1895. By that year, French and German pressure on both sides of Ashanti had assumed critical proportions,<sup>4</sup> and it was also clear that France had no intention of respecting Britain's flimsy commercial treaties to the north. The British ultimatum,<sup>5</sup> of 1895, to Ashanti amounted to a belated realisation that firm control over that region would be essential to any efforts to develop the coastal

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<sup>1</sup>The objectives of both Griffith and Ferguson are clearly stated in the correspondence between them. See Metcalfe, op. cit., Chapter 28.

<sup>2</sup>The Marquis of Ripon [Secretary of State for the Colonies] to F. M. Hodgson [Governor], 30 January, 1894, in Metcalfe, op. cit., p. 463.

<sup>3</sup>Particularly the Nile question. See Robinson, Gallagher and Denny, op. cit., Chapter 10.

<sup>4</sup>Maxwell [Governor] to Ripon, 13 June, 1895, in Metcalfe, op. cit., pp. 477-479.

<sup>5</sup>Chamberlain [Secretary of State for the Colonies] to Maxwell, 6 September, 1895, in Metcalfe, op. cit., p. 480.





settlements. Rather than have the Ashantis delay their reply to the demand that Britain be recognised as the paramount authority, an expedition was despatched, early in 1896, which made further negotiation redundant.<sup>1</sup> In turn, the occupation of Ashanti opened the way for effective control over the Northern Territories.

Chamberlain, the central figure in these events, played an interesting role in the dramatic alteration of British policy with regard to West Africa. His political creed, was a strange mixture of 'municipal socialism', liberalism and belief in the value of imperial unity.<sup>2</sup> A remarkable feature of his tenure of the Colonial Office was that it provided a Minister who had chosen responsibility for the Colonies in preference to Cabinet positions traditionally rated higher.<sup>3</sup> Impressed by the idea of 'imperial destiny', Chamberlain believed that the "undeveloped estates" of the Empire could provide not only worthwhile challenges to commercial and cultural enterprise, but could also offer a general panacea for Britain's own economic difficulties.<sup>4</sup>

With regard to West Africa, Chamberlain believed that

<sup>1</sup>See Chapter 3, below, pp. 64-68.

<sup>2</sup>Lady Lugard to J. L. Garvin in J. L. Garvin, Life of Joseph Chamberlain, 1895-1900, Vol. 3, London, 1934, p. 11 ff.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Foreign and Colonial Speeches by the Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain, M. P., George Routledge and Sons Ltd., London, 1897, passim.





indifference had already compromised the British position quite badly, and that she should yield no further to French demands. His intransigence over this matter resulted in a frequently strained relationship with Lord Salisbury, the Prime Minister, who was quite prepared to surrender advantages and territories in West Africa for the sake of conciliating France over Egypt. Chamberlain, in contrast, advocated a militant stand against French probings throughout the Sudan, and particularly in areas where Britain held interests.<sup>1</sup>

The settlement of 1898<sup>2</sup> was much of a compromise between these two opposing positions. Britain gained some concessions, in exchange for others awarded the French. On balance, Britain retained most of the areas with which she had any significant contact, while France gained territory in a manner commensurate with her great efforts and expenditure.<sup>3</sup>

The above pattern thus appears to accord with the views expressed by Robinson and Gallagher. Informal methods of controlling the Gold Coast became increasingly obsolete towards the end of the nineteenth century, partly due to local problems - notably Ashanti - but largely because of

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<sup>1</sup>Metcalfe, op. cit., p. 487. Amongst Chamberlain's schemes was the formation of the West African Frontier Force, which was designed to contain threatening military thrusts by the French Senegalese troops.

<sup>2</sup>Convention Between the United Kingdom and France for the Delimitation of Their Respective Possessions to the West of the Niger, and of their Respective Possessions and Spheres of Influence to the East of that River, Paris, 14 June, 1898. Extracts in Metcalfe, op. cit., pp. 503-504.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.





foreign rivalry. The rather casual British position eventually became so untenable that a 'forward' policy had to be implemented, and informal dominion was replaced by the imperial orthodoxy of annexation.

However, if any attempt is to be made to incorporate these events into a wider theoretical framework, then there are other factors to be considered. Foreign rivalry, and a nationalistic reluctance to yield to the consequent pressure, did not instigate the imperial interest in the Gold Coast; it merely pressed for the consolidation and protection of an existing interest. Similarly, this concern owed little to the long-standing involvement with Egypt and southern Africa. Fundamentally, there was an heritage of economic interests to protect.

In Hobsonian style, the merchants of Liverpool and London, alarmed by the prospect of the establishment of an uncontested foreign authority in the hinterland of the Gold Coast Settlements, demanded protection for their various commercial enterprises, and for the safeguarding of their interests in the Northern Territories.<sup>1</sup> Governors of the Colony also made clear that only an extension of British rule could curb the disruption of trade by Ashanti, and the encroachment of foreign power. Complementing these two pressure groups, a Colonial Secretary took office at home who

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<sup>1</sup>For example, see Resolution of the West African Section of the London Chamber of Commerce, London, 8 March, 1892, in Metcalfe, op. cit., pp. 376-454.





was determined to implement a 'practical' policy for the development of the Empire. Thus, it seemed possible that an open policy of imperial expansion and consolidation could alleviate unemployment in Britain, check foreign competition in trade, compensate for the difficulties due to the erection of tariff barriers in Europe and America, and assure the development of the colonial Empire. There can be little doubt that whatever the immediate causes of imperial expansion, economic influences cannot be ignored.

#### THE BACKGROUND TO IMPERIALISM: DOMESTIC BRITISH POLITICS IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Despite the prominence of the 'New Imperialism',

the parliamentary scene from 1875 until the end of Victoria's reign was dominated more by the Irish Question than by any other.<sup>1</sup>

Ireland's agrarian and nationalist rebellions made great demands upon parliamentary time and governmental attention, and were largely responsible for fundamental changes in the structure of British politics in the late nineteenth century. Gladstone's Second Ministry (1880-1885), which entered office with a massive electoral majority, soon encountered difficulties through the inability of its 'Whig', 'Moderate' and 'Radical' factions to agree upon an Irish

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<sup>1</sup>David Thomson, England in the Nineteenth Century (1815-1914), Harmondsworth, England, 1963, p. 180.



policy.<sup>1</sup> Further disagreement over imperial affairs, with the Whigs advocating a 'Forward' policy, and Gladstone's Moderates urging 'Consolidation', contributed to the Government's growing impotency.

The announcement of an unqualified Home Rule programme for Ireland, following Gladstone's retention of office in 1886, provoked a division in the Liberal ranks which presaged the beginning of the decline of Liberalism from the fore of British politics.<sup>2</sup> Chamberlain, the Radical leader, and ninety-two kindred spirits, mainly Moderates and Whigs, deserted from the Government cause and formed a loose alliance with the Conservative Party.<sup>3</sup> The coalition was successful in terminating the life of Gladstone's Government by defeating the second reading of the Home Rule Bill.

For a subsequent period of ten years' duration the Liberal Unionists, as the dissidents became known, operated as a third force in parliamentary politics, belonging to neither Government nor Official Opposition.<sup>4</sup> Their role, however, was not well-defined. The Whig contingent amongst them found itself aligned with the Conservative Government

<sup>1</sup>R. E. Robinson, "Imperial Problems in British Politics, 1880 - 1895," in Camb. Hist. Br. Emp., op. cit., p. 131.

J. L. Garvin, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 317-319.

<sup>2</sup>See George Dangerfield, The Strange Death of Liberal England, 1910 - 1914, New York, 1961, *passim*.

<sup>3</sup>M. C. Hurst, "Joseph Chamberlain and West Midland Politics, 1886-1895," Dugdale Society Occasional Papers, No. 15, Oxford, 1962, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.





on many issues, apart from Ireland. Hence, the departure of a large body of Whigs from Gladstone's Party brought about a rationalisation of party politics, by closing the increasingly obsolescent divide between the forces of conservatism.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, Chamberlain and the small group of Radical Unionists, while anxious to maintain a Unionist Government in office, were not happy about their peculiarly isolated political position. They remained ideologically attached to the cause of social reform, but were detached from its political vehicle by the Home Rule issue, which had become the most important source of schism in British politics. Chamberlain adjusted to this circumstance by turning his energies in another direction, and yet he never lost sight of domestic affairs.

Like Milner, however, he came to believe that the development of the Empire was not only an admirable intrinsic objective, but could lead to a solution to economic distress at home.<sup>2</sup> The idea of 'positive imperialism', which Chamberlain advocated, seems to have been partially aroused by the

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<sup>1</sup>Other than in name, there was by that time little to choose between Tories and Whigs, who both tended to adopt right-wing stances. The left-ward positions on the spectrum were occupied by Radicals, Moderates and a few Conservatives. From 1900, however, the newly-formed Labour Party extended the political spectrum further left than ever before.

<sup>2</sup>S. B. Saul, "The Economic Significance of 'Constructive Imperialism'," Journal of Economic History, Vol. 17 (1957), p. 174.





writings of Seeley and Dilke<sup>1</sup> - the latter being a personal friend of long standing - but it is also likely that Chamberlain's enthusiasm owed much to the interest engendered by his responsibility for colonial affairs in the Commons, between 1880 and 1885.<sup>2</sup> Whatever the origin of his belief in constructive imperialism, and Saul has suggested that it was highly pragmatic, that purpose came to dominate his political life. Upon his resignation, in 1903, Chamberlain remarked:

For my part I care only for the great question of Imperial Unity. Everything else is secondary or consequential.<sup>3</sup>

In 1895 the expedient, but loose association between the Conservative Party and the Liberal Unionists was strengthened by the decision to form a coalition Government. Under this arrangement, Chamberlain took office as Secretary of State for the Colonies. Words used of Lord Milner may also be used to illustrate Chamberlain's views on the Empire:

He was an Imperialist. Since nobody has yet shown how this small, over-populated, over-industrialised island is expected to survive without Imperial interests, this is not surprising.<sup>4</sup>

The general growth of imperial sentiment within Britain in

<sup>1</sup>Sir John Seeley, The Expansion of England, Macmillan and Co. Limited, London, 1883.

Sir Charles Dilke, Problems of Greater Britain, Macmillan and Co. Limited, London, 1890.

<sup>2</sup>Saul, op. cit., p. 174.

<sup>3</sup>Elsie E. Gulley, Joseph Chamberlain and English Social Politics, New York, 1926, p. 317.

<sup>4</sup>Edward Crankshaw, The Forsaken Idea, London, 1952, p. 8.



the last quarter of the nineteenth century

. . . owed much to the vague feeling of pessimism over Britain's economic position that pervaded the years of the Great Depression . . . .<sup>1</sup>

Challenged by foreign competition in the world's markets,<sup>2</sup> hurt by the growing impotency of Free Trade, and distressed by massive agricultural employment, it seemed to many that Britain's future hinged upon the economic development of the Empire. Himself unashamedly an 'economic man', Chamberlain's own words express that feeling:

. . . the Empire to parody a celebrated expression is commerce. It was created by commerce, it is founded on commerce, and it could not exist a single day without commerce.<sup>3</sup>

It was under these imperial and domestic circumstances that Britain extended and formally consolidated her interest in the Gold Coast, which nevertheless remained a relatively insignificant corner of the Empire.

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<sup>1</sup>Saul, op. cit., p. 173.

<sup>2</sup>See Ross J. S. Hoffman, Great Britain and the German Trade Rivalry, 1875-1914, New York, 1964, *passim*.

<sup>4</sup>Speech to the Congress of Chambers of Commerce of the Empire, London, June 10, 1896, quoted in Foreign and Colonial Speeches of the Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain . . . ., op. cit., p. 102.





## CHAPTER IV

### ASPECTS OF THE GOLD COAST ECONOMY

#### IN AND ABOUT 1900

Although they are of fundamental importance, the economic elements considered in this study do not conveniently fit into a coherent theoretical framework. They do not, for example, constitute the 'economic structure' of the Gold Coast,<sup>1</sup> nor do they comprise the total sectoral content of the economy. The basic requirement of an economic feature, for it to be included, is that it should have been directly influenced by the British regime and, or, British colonial policy. Thus, consumption and income characteristics and patterns have been largely ignored, as in direct or derived phenomena,<sup>2</sup> and emphasis has been focalized primarily upon production and exchange. Related matters, including the effects of the colonial currency system, have been examined

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<sup>1</sup>For a vigorous exposition of the concept of economic structure, and its application to the Gold Coast, see R. Szereszewski, Structural Changes in the Economy of Ghana, 1891-1911, London, 1965.

<sup>2</sup>Unlike demand, both income and consumption necessarily follow production and, hence, with minor exceptions, are derivatives of it. Government can influence production more easily and effectively, in the macroeconomy, than either income or consumption, and it was with production that the Gold Coast Government was mainly concerned.





at later stages,<sup>1</sup> but it is with these two elements of the economy that the present chapter is concerned.

#### PRIMARY AND SECONDARY PRODUCTION

At the beginning of the twentieth century the Gold Coast economy was strongly dominated by a wide range of traditional activities based upon ancient methods of farming, local craft industries and well-established types and spatial patterns of trade. It has been estimated that the traditional sector of the economy was responsible for 74 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product in 1901.<sup>2</sup> Ten years earlier, in 1891, however, the proportion had been 84 per cent.<sup>3</sup> The intervening decline reflected the beginnings of significant development in the modern, or 'introduced',<sup>4</sup> sector.

Nevertheless, much of the expenditure in the modern sector was related to initial investment projects, particularly in the mining industry and in the infrastructure of the economy, and did not reflect any substantial increase in the actual output of established industries.<sup>5</sup> Thus, despite the

<sup>1</sup>In Chapters 5 and 6, below.

<sup>2</sup>Szereszewski, op. cit., p. 45.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>4</sup>The term is used by Szereszewski to denote non-traditional economic activities, such as those connected with export production and trade based upon imported goods. Ibid., Appendix 6.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., Chapter 3.



favourable prospects for future development indicated by such investment, the economy was still essentially primitive. Primary activities were clearly of outstanding importance, but this should not be taken as a basis for assuming that secondary and tertiary production were non-existent. The traditional economy supported a variety of secondary industries, which in places became highly specialised. On the other hand, imperfect division of labour - which prevails generally in under-developed societies<sup>1</sup> - meant that both primary and secondary producers also engaged, on a part-time basis, in those activities now referred to as tertiary. They were supported by a limited number of specialised tertiary producers. The existence of such services should not, however, disguise either the low level of sophistication obtained by the economy or the prominence of primary industries.

## 1. STAPLE FOOD PRODUCTION

Within the traditional sector of the economy food farming was the most important activity, as it remains today. According to White, in 1956,

in Intertropical Africa by far the greater part of the economic effort is absorbed in the production of food for subsistence. In spite of the considerable degree of economic development in progress there, the Gold Coast is no exception to the rule.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See P. T. Bauer and B. S. Yamey, "Economic Progress and Occupational Distribution," Economic Journal, Vol. 61 (1951), pp. 741-55.

<sup>2</sup>H. P. White, "Internal Exchange of Staple Foods in the Gold Coast," Economic Geography, Vol. 32 (1956), p. 115.





White pointed out that in 1948, 78.2 per cent of the male working population of the Gold Coast was employed in agriculture. Despite the great employment concentration in that field, however, agricultural produce - with the exception of cocoa - accounted for only 1.8 per cent of the total value of exports.<sup>1</sup> Since cocoa farmers constituted only about 11.5 per cent of the male labour force,<sup>2</sup> it is clear that the great majority of working males were engaged in agricultural production for internal consumption. Food farming would be the most important item.

In 1900, when the alternatives to agricultural employment were even fewer, and the export trade less developed, food production was certainly of greater significance. Statistical evidence to support this assumption is scarce, but a recent work by Szereszewski affords a useful insight into the employment structure at the beginning of the present century. Szereszewski has estimated that in 1901 some 23,000 people were employed directly in the introduced sector, including 10,000 working on the railways and 6,000 in the mines.<sup>3</sup> About 1,000 of the total consisted of Europeans.<sup>4</sup> From various estimates of labour input in the cocoa industry,

<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>S. La Anyane, "Agriculture in the General Economy," Chapter 14 in Agriculture and Land Use in Ghana, ed. J. B. Wills, London, 1962, p. 192.

<sup>3</sup>Szereszewski, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.





it would also appear that a further 9,000 to 18,000 people were engaged in cocoa farming, a non-traditional activity situated within the framework of the indigenous economy.<sup>1</sup> Adopting the higher figure in this range - 18,000 - it thus seems probable that all but perhaps 40,000 of the Gold Coast's total population of 1.8 millions<sup>2</sup> were engaged in traditional economic activities. Since even the cocoa farmers grow their own food,<sup>3</sup> there would have been few people who did not participate in food production, whether on a part-time or full-time basis.

Rather misleadingly, no attempt has yet been made to distinguish food farming from food production. Although the former is the main basis for the latter, in the Gold Coast, the two are not inseparable. Hunting, fishing and even gathering serve to supplement the traditional diet, but do not offer alternative means of subsistence. Other than in :

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<sup>1</sup>This employment range is derived from Szereszewski's estimate [See ibid., p. 41 and Appendix C] that in 1901 3.4 million man-days were invested in new cocoa plantings. For the very approximate figure required here, that figure was divided by 365 - on the hypothetical assumption that each man worked a full year on new plantings - giving an employment estimate of 9,315. However, in view of a number of factors - including activities other than planting, holidays, inclement weather conditions, etc. - it is more reasonable to assume that each man worked only half a year on new plantings, giving an employment figure of about 18,000. Since the industry was in a phase of rapid expansion, it is likely that practically all cocoa farmers were extending their plantings, and the figure of 18,000 may be used for the total employment as well as that in expansion. Nevertheless, it remains a very rough estimate, and is not intended to show more than the scale of the matter.

<sup>2</sup>Szereszewski's estimate; ibid., Appendix B.

<sup>3</sup>White, op. cit., p. 115.





its locational, or distributional aspects, food farming has changed very little in the Gold Coast since 1900; now, as then, it is essentially concerned with the cultivation of starchy staple crops, the species varying from place to place largely according to physical conditions. Specialised livestock management is still very rare, although domestic animals are reared by most farmers. Even the Fulani herds-men, have long combined herding with crop cultivation in the Gold Coast.

In view of the continuity of the essential characteristics of food farming, it is proposed to examine the modern agricultural patterns in order to obtain an insight into the situation in 1900. The techniques and crops of farming in present-day Ghana vary principally between those of the forest zone, in the south, and those of the northern savannas. Throughout most of the area which formerly comprised the Northern Territories, yams are the staple crop and food, but several cereals are also quite important - maize, guineacorn (sorghum) and, less commonly, millet. Various supplementary bulk crops and vegetables are also grown, including pulses (leguminous plants), cassava and sweet potato.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>J. B. Wills, "The General Pattern of Land Use," Chapter 15 in Agriculture and Land Use in Ghana, op. cit. [The subsequent abbreviation for this work is A. L. U. G.] White, op. cit.

William Allan, The African Husbandman, London, 1965, pp. 233-251.





Land-rotation is a standard farming practice in the ex-Northern Territories, as it is throughout most of the country. In appearance the system is very similar to that of shifting cultivation, with which it is frequently confused. In both cases, land is cleared and cultivated for several years, the length of the cultivation period varying, following which bush and perhaps forest regeneration is allowed to occur. The major difference between the two systems is that whereas rotation-farming is based upon permanent settlement, the shifting cultivator abandons his dwelling-place with his fields and begins life afresh elsewhere.<sup>1, 2</sup>

Hence, the rotation-farmer must move within limits prescribed by a distance factor. Although these limits vary in practice, he will obviously not be prepared to travel further than a certain distance from his home to work. Usually, the rotation-farmer - or his family or community - owns a definite area of land, only parts of which are cultivated at any particular time. The remainder consists of land in fallow, which is either recuperating from previous cultivation or awaiting clearance for the first time, and waste-land, which may cease to be waste if population pressure

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<sup>1</sup>See Wills, op. cit., and Allan, ibid., p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>It is increasingly becoming apparent that shifting cultivation, based upon movement of settlement, is much rarer than has commonly been supposed. Permanency of settlement and land-rotation seems to be much closer to the tropical norm.

See Robert L. Carneiro, "Slash-and-Run Agriculture: A Closer Look at its Implications for Settlement Patterns," in Men and Cultures: Selected Papers of the Fifth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Philadelphia, 1960, pp. 229-234.





becomes excessive. Basically, then, the system is not totally dissimilar from the European 'three-fields' method of land management. Perhaps the most important difference is that in Ghana, and other parts of the tropical world, alternatives to rotational fallow seem to be neither as simple nor as inexpensive as those developed in the mid-latitudes.

The basic economic unit in the North is the family, but its distinction as such is blurred by a nucleated settlement pattern, and by the close integration of village members' land for cooperative working purposes. A settlement complex typically consists of a number of independent, thatched, clay and wattle huts located in the midst of an area of grazed grassland. In the North-east and East the buildings are rounded in form, whereas they are rectangular in the North-west. They are scattered irregularly over the village site in both cases. However, in South-western Gonja they are rectangular, close together, and enclose a central courtyard.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike further north, in the sudan zone, northern Ghana's livestock-rearing, which is important, is integrated into the general agricultural system; it is not a distinct economic activity. Approximately 70 per cent of the country's cattle is found in the North, plus large numbers of sheep and goats. However, few farmers are prosperous enough to own herds of cattle, and consequently great value is placed upon

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<sup>1</sup>Wills, op. cit.





the few beasts owned by the typical individual.<sup>1</sup> This means that the annual 'crop' of cattle is low - about 7 per cent of the total population. The social functions of livestock tend to depress the crop-rate lower than it might otherwise be, for cattle represent conspicuous wealth and are also used as part of the 'bride price' paid in marriage ceremonies. Hence, they are not to be disposed of without sound reason.<sup>2</sup>

Economically, the northern area of Ghana is comparatively poor, in Ghanaian as well as Western terms. There is a general shortage of resource wealth which is reflected not only in the lack of mineral and cash crop development, but also in the usual absence of significant food surpluses. Most of the region is afflicted by physical conditions which do not favour agricultural prosperity, and which render farming marginal, even at a subsistence level.<sup>3</sup> Although less serious than in periods before the establishment of British rule, when there was little opportunity to obtain food from elsewhere, a poor harvest still causes widespread food deficits and rural distress.<sup>4</sup> Hence, agriculture and the population

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<sup>1</sup>David Tait, The Konkomba of Northern Ghana, London, 1961, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>R. A. Hutchinson, "Stock and Methods of Animal Husbandry," Chapter 24 in A. L. U. G., op. cit., p. 429.

<sup>3</sup>This, of course, applies to the present level of agricultural achievement. It is conceivable that it need not always be so.

<sup>4</sup>T. E. Hilton, "Land Planning and Resettlement in Northern Ghana," Geography, Vol. 44 (1959), pp. 227-40.

White, op. cit., pp. 119-20.

Thomas T. Poleman, "The Food Economics of Urban Middle Africa: The Case of Ghana," Food Research Institute Studies, Stanford, Vol. 2 (1961), p. 128.





are acutely sensitive to the behaviour of physical factors such as precipitation.

With regard to climate, northern Ghana owes much to a tropical, interior location, and to inconsiderable variation in relief; the terrain is predominantly low-lying, though not flat. Together, these conditions mean that temperatures are fairly uniform, throughout the region and the year, and seasonal fluctuations do not notably disturb vegetation growth. Seasonal variation is more clearly provided by the precipitation regime, and is manifest in a pattern of wet 'summers' and dry 'winters'.<sup>1</sup>

Rainfall totals vary from 35 - 40 inches per year in the central area to a little more than 50 inches in the extreme North-west and South-east. Walker has distinguished two zones of different seasonal pattern in northern Ghana. The first occurs north and east of a line between Wa and Salaga, and experiences a single 'rainy' season. Within this zone monthly rainfall totals rise steadily from March, with a pause in June or July, to a maximum value in August or September. The second zone lies south and west of the Wa-Salaga line, and is characterised by a single wet season, with even monthly totals of precipitation.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>H. O. Walker, "Weather and Climate," Chapter 2 in A. L. U. G., op. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.





On the whole, rainfall totals would be adequate for agricultural and settlement purposes, despite a slight decrease from south to north, if other factors could be ignored. All places receive more than 35 inches of precipitation per year, on average, but the average value tends to under-estimate the rainfall variability factor, which is particularly important in northern Ghana. Unfortunately, it is the areas with the lowest rainfall values which also suffer from the greatest degree of unreliability.<sup>1</sup> Most of the North has a variability rating of more than 14 per cent. Combined with the prevailing high temperatures and thin vegetative cover,<sup>2</sup> this variability is sufficient to produce severe water deprivation in unfavourable years.

Water availability is a problem of varying significance in northern Ghana, but the whole region suffers from a shortage, especially of drinking water.<sup>3</sup> Difficulties are increased by the absence of a forest cover to regulate runoff. Within this general context conditions differ locally, mainly according to geological factors. Most of the North

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 14. This problem is a common feature in West Africa. See D. C. Ledger, "Some Hydrological Characteristics of West African Rivers," Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, No. 35 (1966), p. 75.

<sup>2</sup>Walker (op. cit., p. 27) suggests that potential evapo-transpiration values in the Ghanaian savannas average  $5\frac{1}{2}$  feet per year. This, of course, is considerably greater than precipitation levels.

<sup>3</sup>D. A. Bates, "Rural Water Supplies," Chapter 4 in A. L. U. G., op. cit., p. 62.





is underlain by rocks of the Voltaian Formation, a group of thin, Palaeozoic sedimentaries which occupies much of eastern and central Ghana. The majority of the Voltaian materials - sandstones, quartzites, shales, arkoses, and mudstone - are both compacted and cemented, properties which hinder permeability. However, they are also frequently well-jointed and on the southern and western edges of the Formation's extent the sandstones and residual sands hold considerable quantities of groundwater. Some of this is released by springs, which feed the country's few permanent streams.<sup>1</sup>

The central Voltaian outcrops, on the other hand, consist mainly of shale, which is usually near to the surface and capped by laterite beds. Farming conditions are consequently poor. Percolation is checked, and extensive flooding during the wet season is typically followed by surface aridity during drier parts of the year.

Pre-Cambrian granites and granodiorites extend throughout most of the northern and north-western parts of the former Northern Territories, but are often overlain by detrital sand. Hence, run-off is slight and surface water scarce, whereas percolation is considerable and favours groundwater accumulation. The granites and granodiorites

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<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

Idem., "Geology," Chapter 3 in A. L. U. G., op. cit.

These references are to the main sources used for obtaining material presented in the remainder of the discussion of groundwater conditions.





are found in close association with rocks of the Birrimian Formation, which are also of Pre-Cambrian origin but are mainly metamorphic.

In localities such as those around Wa, Lawra and Tumu, in the North-west, groundwater is accessible in areas of deep weathering which are related to fracture belts within the granites. Weathering in that district has attained depths twice as great as further east; near Wa it has reached 450 feet. Although extensive field work has not yet been undertaken to verify the point, it appears very likely that the north-western areas have greater groundwater reserves than do the Navrongo, Bolgatanga and Bawku districts. Even so, the latter areas have many favourable sites for boreholes.

One further point in connection with groundwater conditions concerns the differential weathering process which operates upon sedimentary and the Birrimian volcanic materials. Under hot and wet conditions, they tend to leave an argillaceous residue which favours surface water accumulation, and run-off, but not groundwater. However, under drier conditions weathering is slower than erosion, the result being that no such residue forms. Instead, virtually unweathered rock often protrudes, offering favourable prospects for groundwater collection. The full areal significance of this phenomenon is not likely to be recognisable before more intensive research in the field has been made, but it





does promise to hold wide implications for settlement in the North.

Rather less is known about the soils of northern Ghana than the region's other physical characteristics.<sup>1</sup> Detailed studies have been limited to small areas of the Voltaian sedimentary zone. Hence, soil region boundaries have only been mapped in a tentative fashion. Most of them have been plotted on the basis of theoretical estimation rather than the results of field surveys.<sup>2</sup> One of the more general, but still very significant, features of soils in the savanna zone, which extends southwards to the coast in eastern Ghana, is that they possess lower humus content and a lower nutrient status than soils underlying a continuous forest cover.

One of the more extensive and economically-useful soils is the Savanna Ochrosol, which is widely farmed in the Gambaga Highlands, around Tamale, in the Techiman-Wenchi area, near Ejura, and in the modern Volta Region. Although the humus factor is smaller, this soil has a profile very similar to that of the Forest Ochrosol, which supports much of the cocoa and other cash crops grown in southern Ghana. Over Voltaian sandstones and Birrimian and Tarkwaian phyllites and schists, the Savanna Ochrosol usually develops as a

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<sup>1</sup>The principal sources of information which have been used are: H. Brammer, "Soils" and "Soil Erosion and Conservation," Chapters 6 and 8 in A. L. U. G., op. cit.

<sup>2</sup>P. H. Nye and D. Stephens, "Soil Fertility," Chapter 7 in A. L. U. G., op. cit.





well-drained, friable, porous and loamy soil. In valley bottoms, however, it tends to be more acidic.

Most of the North is covered by groundwater laterites, and a variety of soil-types intermediate in status between the Laterites and the Ochrosols. Both the Laterites and the intermediate types coincide approximately with Voltaian shales and with granite rocks, their origin being essentially due to the poor internal drainage of the parent materials. In general, the Savanna Ochrosols appear to be associated with those areas of above average elevation (500 to 1000 feet), and are hence better drained, and with annual precipitation values slightly higher than 40 inches. Nevertheless, such generalizations are intended to apply only to the region as a whole; the local patterning of soils is a good deal more complex than can be indicated here.

With the exception of a small area of Sudan Savanna and Woodland in the extreme North-east, Guinea Savanna vegetation covers the whole of northern Ghana, providing the region with a uniformity which parallels that due to climate. One result is that drainage conditions, which vary with geological differentiation, are especially significant for soil formation. Through the soil medium, they also affect human settlement patterns, since soils formed in places of impeded drainage have relatively little agricultural potential, and are little-cultivated. The Groundwater Laterites formed over Voltaian rocks are poor and thinly developed, and seem to be particularly unpopular for farming. In granite areas





the situation is a little better but soils are still rendered poor by their susceptibility to drought and erosion.

The exploratory soil maps available do not lend themselves to detailed analysis, but they do suggest that the human adjustment to variations in soil fertility has taken into account other factors. In the North-west and North-east, for example, the location of pockets of unusually dense population, associated with compound farming, cannot be explained in terms of soil fertility. Near Bawku, in the Kusasi district, population concentration occurs on Laterite and intergrade soils. In contrast, an adjacent area of Savanna Ochrosols to the south, around Gambaga, is relatively thinly populated. Again, the high population densities noticeable in the Zuarungu area appear to be quite unaffected by the location of soil-type boundaries. Ochrosols and intergrades are farmed indiscriminately, although it may be that generalisation in the preparation of soil maps has concealed local soil selection.

In the North-west the situation is a little different, as high population densities are more clearly associated with Savanna Ochrosols, the better soils. However, the population distribution may be termed 'unbalanced' in the rather special sense that the concentration in the district of Lawra (1960) is not matched by similarly high densities further south, in Wala, where there is an equal area of Savanna Ochrosols. Water availability may partially account for this differentiation, but it is unlikely to be a critical factor as the Wala area receives a higher rainfall than is normal in

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northern Ghana. Even more surprising is the low population density of the large area of Ochrosols around Damongo, which has recently become a game reserve. In all, then, the soil patterns of northern Ghana do not appear to have been a strong determinant of either settlement or farming-type location.

As mentioned earlier, the vegetation of the region is relatively homogenous. The Guinea Savanna Formation is prevalent almost throughout northern Ghana, and cannot be sub-divided into northern and southern varieties, as is possible in Nigeria.<sup>1</sup> Although it covers two-thirds of the country, the ecological status of the Formation in Ghana is as uncertain and controversial as that of savanna vegetation throughout West Africa. Briefly, there appear to be no climatic reasons why 'woody perennials' should not dominate the plant communities of the savanna areas; they are known to occur in drier tropical zones.<sup>2</sup>

In the modern view a partial explanation, at least, lies in the ecological significance of burning and grazing, factors known to be important controls of vegetation distribution. Most of the common trees found in savanna areas - including the oil palm and the baobab - are either fire-resistant or repellent to grazing animals. Such properties

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<sup>1</sup>H. G. Baker, "The Ecological Study of Vegetation in Ghana," Chapter 9 in A. L. U. G., op. cit., p. 159.

<sup>2</sup>S. R. Eyre, Vegetation and Soils: A World Picture, London, 1963, p. 241.





afford the respective species clear advantages, in the competition for survival, in an area where extensive firing and grazing are traditional components of agriculture, and natural plant hazards. It is believed that such trees are relics of a wooded plant formation which approximated more closely than the present Guinea Savanna to a theoretical climax vegetation.<sup>1</sup> Credence is given to this interpretation by the results of experimental work in Nigerian Savanna areas. There, it has been found that trees multiply quickly, in numbers and species, when protected from fire. The obvious implication is that much savanna is not climatic climax vegetation.<sup>2</sup> However, further work will be necessary to determine whether or not it can be categorically said that savanna is never a vegetational climax.

In the extreme north-eastern and north-western areas of the country a system of agriculture, known as compound farming, has developed which is quite distinctive from farming elsewhere in the savanna zone. It is particularly unusual in being based upon the permanent cropping of land unrelieved by fallow periods. The main crops are grains, including maize, millet and sorghum. Settlement is dispersed - another unusual feature - and each family has its own land and buildings.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 239-249.

<sup>2</sup>R. W. J. Keay, "An Example of Sudan Zone Vegetation in Nigeria," Journal of Ecology, Vol. 36 (1949), pp. 335-364.

<sup>3</sup>Wills, op. cit.

T. E. Hilton, Practical Geography in Africa, London, 1961, p. 124.

Allan, op. cit., pp. 241-246.





One of the more interesting facets of the system is that it supports extraordinarily high population densities. In 1960, for example, the Frafra local administrative district had an average population density of 204 people per square mile. Together, the districts of Kusasi, Frafra, Builsa, Kassena-Nankanni and Lawra, comprising 12 per cent of the area of the Northern Region, held more than 45 per cent of its population.<sup>1</sup> In all of those districts compound farming is common. A subject of much speculation is whether such high densities have resulted from the intensity of cultivation, or whether the agricultural system, itself, was produced by existing high levels of population concentration.

Some support is given to the second view by the fact, that in peripheral areas, where population pressure is lower, some land is farmed on a rotation basis. It is cropped for several years and then left to recover under bush fallow. Again, it has been noticed that when compound farmers move to less-populated areas they invariably abandon intensive cultivation methods for the more extensive rotation system.<sup>2</sup> Even more significantly, it is now recognised that the rather haphazard and primitive manuring operations undertaken by compound farmers do not, at the present time, completely maintain soil fertility and structure. Over wide areas,

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<sup>1</sup>Data from Volume One of the 1960 Population Census of Ghana, Accra, 1962.

<sup>2</sup>W. Manshard, "Land Use Patterns and Agricultural Migration in Central Ghana (Western Gonja)," Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie, Vol. 52 (1961), p. 229.





soils are steadily deteriorating, suggesting that the system is more of a delaying measure than a successful experiment in improved agriculture.<sup>1</sup>

It has been observed that there is an interesting affinity between compound farming in northern Ghana and a similar system, also in savanna country, to the south of Lake Chad.<sup>2</sup> There, manuring and permanent settlement and cropping are established features of local agriculture, and there, too, soil fertility is steadily declining. At one time, according to Dumont, this was compensated for by periodic movement of the entire farm to a new area, which amounted to a large-scale variety of shifting cultivation.<sup>3</sup> Settlement only became fully permanent with the establishment of the French colonial administration, which tended to discourage and restrict such movements. Allan has suggested that compound farming may have developed in a similar manner in northern Ghana, the main difference being that it was probably population growth and pressure which restricted mobility. This thesis is not unreasonable, but it does leave open the question of why only a few peoples should have adopted or developed the system of compound farming. The answer may be that the compound farmers migrated to northern Ghana

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<sup>1</sup>See Wills, op. cit., p. 214.

Hilton, "Land Planning and Resettlement in Northern Ghana," op. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Allan, op. cit., pp. 244-246.

<sup>3</sup>R. Dumont, Types of Rural Economy: Studies in World Agriculture, London, 1957, Chapter 3.





from elsewhere, taking their techniques with them. At the moment the problem is open to speculation, but it appears unlikely that peoples in close proximity should have developed such different responses to the same difficulties. Migration is a more attractive answer and as Ward has said,

The Gold Coast is part of the western Sudan, and over it for thousands of years have flowed and ebbed the folk-wanderings of the African races.<sup>1</sup>

Despite, and perhaps because of, permanent and intensive cultivation compound farming is a marginal operation in subsistence terms. A formidable problem is that in both the North-east and North-west soil fertility is declining, increasingly with population growth, and soil erosion is becoming more serious. Indeed, as yet, these are the only areas of the country which do suffer significantly from soil erosion.<sup>2</sup> Soil conditions and the absence of alternative natural resources have together meant that living standards have long been below the national level. In poor years - dry crop growing seasons - famine is a traditional prospect.<sup>3</sup>

As elsewhere in the North, cultivation practices have changed little during the past sixty, or more, years. In the north-eastern compound areas each family dwelling, which is circular in form, is immediately adjoined by small kitchen

<sup>1</sup>W. E. F. Ward, A History of Ghana, London, 1958, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup>H. Brammer, "Soil Erosion and Conservation," op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>3</sup>Wills, op. cit., p. 214.





gardens used for growing tobacco, gourds, hibiscus, melon, okra and sweet potatoes. These tiny plots are manured with refuse and night soil. The main fields lie beyond the kitchen gardens, and are devoted to the permanent cultivation of millet, guineacorn, bambara beans and cowpeas. In partial compensation, they are treated with manure - household refuse and animal droppings - on a rather unsystematic basis.<sup>1</sup> Since livestock are not bedded, the quantities of animal manure are lower than they could be. It has been estimated that no more than 12 per cent of the land is manured in any one year.<sup>2</sup> The permanent fields sometimes grade into peripheral areas where short grass fallows are used to check soil dereliction, but again it is mainly grains which are cropped. Away from the most densely populated areas, most families also farm scattered outlying fields on the rotation basis which is usual elsewhere in Ghana.

Livestock supplement both diets and incomes to a small extent. Cattle, donkeys, goats, sheep, fowl and, more rarely, horses are all quite common. An important restriction on livestock numbers is imposed by the availability of water, which can become scarce towards the end of the dry season. Cattle, in particular, are highly regarded as symbols of wealth and the small number a farmer may possess makes him cautious in eating and selling them, for they are

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 214-16.  
Allan, op. cit., pp. 241-46.

<sup>2</sup>Allan, op. cit., p. 244.





difficult to replace. The wealthy minority who are fortunate enough to own large herds of livestock usually leave their management to semi-sedentary Fulani pastoralists, who can seldom afford to obtain their own herds.<sup>1, 2</sup>

Conditions are much the same in the north-western compound region, although slightly more favourable physical environments have produced local differences. Rainfall totals are a little higher (45 - 50 inches as opposed to 38 - 40 inches) and, more significantly, precipitation is more reliable. The population distribution pattern is less dense, too, with the result that more extensive areas are permitted to lie in fallow, and even to recover a tree savanna vegetation cover. Together, the more favourable precipitation regime and lower population pressure have combined to check land exhaustion, a tendency complemented by the more widespread resort to land rotation farming in the North-west. Minor differences between the two compound regions also exist. Buildings in the North-west, though still

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 249-251.

<sup>2</sup> The Fulani - traditional pastoral nomads of interior West Africa - are widely scattered. Most of the 5,500 in Ghana live in the far North, and probably no longer include true nomads. In places they have become completely sedentary and cultivate food crops. Usually, however, they combine herding with the occasional cultivation of cereals and other staple foods. Their crops give very high yields, but this is due more to the abundance of manure than to sound cultivation practices.

See loc. cit.

Derrick J. Stenning, Savannah Nomads, London, 1959, pp. 1 - 4.



of clay and wattle, are rectangular in form, rather than circular. The crops grown are identical, with small exceptions. For example, maize largely replaces early millet in the North-western area. Again, much of the outlying land, under rotation cropping and fallow, tends to be marshy and is used for the growing of rice and yams. As in the North-east, however, trees of economic value - baobab, acacias, shea butter and dawadawa - are usually left uncut when land is cleared.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout Northern Ghana water is comparatively scarce through much of the year. In the compound farming areas surface water is generally in short supply, but groundwater reserves in the weathered granitic and metamorphic rocks are adequate. The numerous bore-holes provide water sufficient for traditional standards of farming. A problem obstructing development, however, is that in normal years there is insufficient water for irrigated cultivation during the dry season, or for the support of larger numbers of livestock.

In southern Ghana - the former Colony and Ashanti - as in the north, food farming has long dominated economic activity. Within the forest zone cocoyam and plantain are the major products, but they are supplemented by a number of other crops, including maize, cassava, bananas and a variety of

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<sup>1</sup>Wills, op. cit., p. 216.





vegetables.<sup>1</sup> Of these, only cassava (manioc) and maize are of comparatively recent introduction in the Gold Coast, both having been brought by the Portuguese.<sup>2</sup> The other food crops have been established much longer, and even cassava and maize were widely grown by the eighteenth century. Thus, the main crops have been well established for several centuries, and so has the system used for their cultivation.

South-eastern Ghana and northern parts of Ashanti - including most of the modern Brong-Ahafo Region - belong to the savanna vegetation zone. Much of this southern extension of the interior savannas, however, is clearly 'derived savanna' and is recognised as a separate vegetation zone. As such, it is really an ecotone and this vegetational characteristic is emphasised by the transitional nature of the food farming system. Basically, the main crops are those of the northern savannas - particularly yam - but proximity to the forests has meant that they are intermingled with the typical forest staples.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Poleman, op. cit., p. 129.

White, op. cit., p. 116.

Wills, op. cit., pp. 219-221.

<sup>2</sup>K. B. Dickson, "The Agricultural Landscape of Southern Ghana and Ashanti-Brong Ahafo: 1800 to 1850," Bulletin of the Ghana Geographical Association, Vol. 9 (1964), pp. 25-35.

W. O. Jones, Manioc in Africa, Stanford, 1959, pp. 60-87.

<sup>3</sup>Wills, op. cit., pp. 221-222.





Another region which deserves separate mention is the 'coastal thicket and grassland' zone, east of Cape Three Points. This area has the lowest rainfall values in the country (below 25 inches per year near Tema), and its sparse, scrub vegetation is in marked contrast to the tropical rain forest west of Cape Three Points. Despite the low precipitation levels, it seems probable that some type of forest is the theoretical climax vegetation for the region.<sup>1</sup> The present vegetation has resulted from many centuries of human interference, particularly in connection with agriculture. Within this zone, yam and maize are the principal food crops.<sup>2</sup>

The forested areas of southern Ghana are economically different from other parts of the country in a number of respects. One of the more important is that they regularly produce large agricultural food surpluses, quite apart from the greater supply of wild food available in the forests. A major advantage is provided by physical conditions more amenable to agriculture than those which prevail in the North. Thus, it is possible to cultivate high-yielding food crops throughout the year, and farming is not troubled by the precipitation fluctuations which can cause disaster further north. Indeed, Poleman has pointed out that agricultural

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<sup>1</sup>D. A. Lane, "The Forest Vegetation," Chapter 10 in A. L. U. G., op. cit., p. 167.

<sup>2</sup>Wills, op. cit., pp. 222-223.



food output is so large in the forest zone that manioc and cocoyams, which are considered inferior foods to maize and plantains, are often not fully cropped.<sup>1</sup>

Although rainfall totals decrease inland, they generally range between 45 and 70 inches in the forest zone. The double maximum-double minimum precipitation regime means that the two drier seasons are individually shorter, and hence less restrictive upon plant growth, than the one long dry period experienced each year in the North. The greater reliability of precipitation in the South is a further advantage.<sup>2</sup>

Tropical soils under forest cover pose a number of familiar assessment problems, which do not require elaboration here. Origin, characteristics and optimum management procedures are all imperfectly understood - more so than is the case with non-tropical soils. Nevertheless, it is clear that the Ghanaian forest soils are quite different from those of the savannas. Although leaching is much greater, due to higher rainfall values and lower potential evapotranspiration rates ( $4\frac{1}{2}$  feet per year as opposed to  $5\frac{1}{2}$  in the savannas<sup>3</sup>), the more luxuriant vegetation of the forests ensures that larger compensating increments of organic material enter the nutrient cycle. Typically,

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<sup>1</sup>Poleman, op. cit., p. 129.

<sup>2</sup>Walker, op. cit., Chapter 2.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 27.





therefore, the nutrient status of forest soils is greater than that of savanna soils. In terms of chemical reaction, the most extensive forest soil type - the Forest Ochrosol - is only slightly acidic. The second most extensive type, the Forest Oxysol, is slightly to moderately acidic. The standard food crops of the forest region are not, however, adversely affected by slight soil acidity.<sup>1</sup>

Once the protective forest cover has been removed for cultivation purposes, however, the underlying soils begin to deteriorate very quickly. Leaching is accelerated by the removal of a vegetative cover capable of absorbing water and checking percolation. In addition, the loss of nutrients to that process, in the upper soil horizons, is no longer compensated by large additions of organic materials. Finally, run-off is greater, and more concentrated, and erosion of the top-soil is consequently speedier.

Rotation farming is a simple and expedient measure for controlling soil deterioration and maintaining agricultural yields. In the first place, the land is only partially cleared of its wild vegetation, and residual tree stumps and rooting systems effectively delay erosion by binding the soil together. Again, cultivated plots are usually quite small, a factor which allows quicker forest regeneration when the plot is eventually abandoned. The recovery of wild

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<sup>1</sup>Eyre, op. cit., pp. 209-215 and 250-258.

Brammer, op. cit., Chapters 6 and 8.

Nye and Stephens, op. cit., Chapter 7.





vegetation, in a period of fallow, also permits a stabilisation of the nutrient cycle at a level nearer to its optimum natural condition. These circumstances suggest that traditional systems of tropical land management are in close harmony with their physical and biotic environments, so long as production aims, population pressure and the level of technology do not change sufficiently to unbalance them.

Apart from local exceptions, food production by means other than farming has in Ghana long been supplementary to the main activity of crop cultivation, but is nevertheless important. Hunting, for example, is undertaken on an occasional basis by most farmers, and the right to hunt game, in areas other than reserves, is carefully upheld by local custom and law.<sup>1</sup> At the turn of the present century the game population of the country was undoubtedly far greater than it is today. Since then, however, the growth of the human population and the introduction of many features of modern technology and economy have led to great reductions in the numbers of game animals. The use of improved weapons in hunting has contributed to this trend, but perhaps more important has been the indirect effect of the destruction and limitation of game environments. In this respect, the clearing of most of the closed forest by cocoa farmers has been very significant.

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<sup>1</sup>R. J. H. Pogucki, "The Main Principles of Rural Land Tenure," Chapter 13 in A. L. U. G., Op. cit., p. 182.



The historical importance of hunting has been indicated by Squire, in a statement which implicitly suggests that the continued reduction of game animals may lead to a national food crisis.

. . . the country has never produced livestock in sufficient quantities to meet local demands. Much of the protein supply has been derived from game animals.<sup>1</sup>

Although the southward movement of livestock from the North, and the territories beyond in the Sudan, is not a very recent innovation, it is reasonably clear that in 1900 the forest-dwellers of the southern Gold Coast must have relied heavily on hunting for the protein in their diet. However, it is the northern savannas, not the southern forests, which provide the natural habitats of the larger and more numerous game animals, and, paradoxically, protein-deficiency diseases are particularly widespread in the North.<sup>2</sup> One reason could be that sedentary people in open savanna-type country find it difficult to obtain regular supplies of meat, without large hunting expeditions, because the larger animals are unlikely to venture near human settlements.

A more basic factor may be that there is a form of cultural indifference towards animal protein supplies. At least some of the northern peoples regard hunting and fishing as enjoyable past-times rather than serious food-producing

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<sup>1</sup>F. A. Squire, "Mammalian Fauna," Chapter 11 in A. L. U. G., op. cit., p. 170.

<sup>2</sup>See, for example, David Tait, The Konkomba of Northern Ghana, Oxford, 1961, p. 14.





activities,<sup>1</sup> suggesting, at least, that animal proteins are not rated as highly as elsewhere. The general character of tropical African diets certainly contains a minimum amount of such foodstuffs. Meals are usually based on a 'stiff porridge or doughy paste' prepared from one or another of the various starchy staple foods. An additional sauce, or thin stew provides 'flavour, protein, fat, vitamins and mineral content.'<sup>2</sup> Sample studies in Kumasi and Sekondi-Takonadi, where the standard of living is higher than in most rural areas of Ghana, have indicated that even there meat and fish contribute no more than 10 per cent of the calorie intake.<sup>3</sup>

Contrary to usual belief, this feature of the Ghanaian (or African) diet is not due simply to poverty or low purchasing power, or even to meat prices being disproportionately high, but appears to be a cultural trait. Surveys of dietary change with income variation have revealed that although expenditure on food may increase with a rise in income, the broad pattern of expenditure on food remains constant, and meat consumption does not increase. The usual trend is for the extra money to be spent on better quality staple foods - for example, maize is purchased rather than manioc.<sup>4</sup> These

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 14-15.

M. Fortes, "Communal Fishing and Fishing Magic in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast," Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, Vol. 67 (1937), pp. 131-142.

<sup>2</sup>Poleman, op. cit., p. 147.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 154-161.





findings may well reflect an under-utilisation of northern Ghana's game resource.

Throughout the country rivers are fished, on a small scale, but fresh-water fishing does not compare in significance with sea-fishing.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, both are traditional activities. In the North fishing is confined to the dry season and catches are too small to provide more than a novelty in the diet of peoples such as the Konkomba and the Tallensi.<sup>2</sup> Along the coastal littoral most of the villages are at present connected in some way with the fishing industry, and again this is very much a traditional orientation. The northward movement of processed sea fish, into the interior, is a familiar feature of internal trade. Keta, Ada and Elmina, for example, were important fishing centres in the late nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> With the exception of the coastal peoples, including the Ewes and certain Fanti groups, fish is not a large element in the modern Ghanaian diet, and much of that consumed is actually imported.<sup>4</sup> At the beginning of the century, then, the fishing industry was probably of very limited significance, although small quantities of produce did enter the internal trade.

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<sup>1</sup>Wills, op. cit., p. 213.

<sup>2</sup>Tait, op. cit., and Fortes, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup>M. Darkoh, "The Economic Life of Buem: 1894-1914," Bulletin of the Ghana Geographical Association, Vol. 9 (1964), p. 45.

<sup>4</sup>La Anyane, op. cit., p. 194.



Another food-producing activity which has traditionally supplemented agriculture is simple collecting, or gathering. Before being so extensively cleared, the southern forests were particularly important in this respect, but even the drier areas of the savannas support a number of undomesticated shrubs and trees, including the shea butter, acacia, dawadawa and others.<sup>1</sup> Such 'natural providers' are usually left untouched when a plot of land is prepared for farming. The rudimentary technology employed in agriculture, however, makes it difficult in practice to distinguish between gathering and cultivation in many cases.<sup>2</sup> The care taken to preserve and protect trees such as the kola and the oil palm, for example, means that their products can often be attributed to neither cultivation nor collection, but only to an indistinguishable activity between the two.

The oil palm is indigenous to West Africa and is an important source of cooking oil, fat and wine in the domestic economy. Although the palm has a surprising degree of environmental tolerance - growing throughout Ghana - it is best suited to fairly open sites with a minimum of shade. At the beginning of the present century, production of oil palm commodities was mainly based upon an elongated east-west belt of territory situated between the coastal scrub and the closed

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter 20 of A. L. U. G., op. cit.

<sup>2</sup>H. J. Bevin, "The Gold Coast Economy about 1880," Transactions of the Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society, Vol. 2 (1956), p. 74.





forest zones.<sup>1</sup> However, it is apparently impossible to determine to what extent the produce was gathered, as opposed to being cultivated.<sup>2</sup> The only guide to a solution to this problem is that there is little evidence of seedlings ever being planted, which suggests that there has been little genuine interest in cultivating the oil palm. On the other hand, human beings have contributed to its present distribution by assisting in the dispersal of the kernel, which was a useless part of the fruit, and hence thrown away, until the development of modern crushing machinery gave it an economic value.

The kola is another valuable tree which has probably been little cultivated. Amongst the savanna-dwellers of West Africa, the kola nut is popular as a masticatory, as a stimulant and as a very nutritious food. It is not valued so highly, however, by the forest people who collect it. Since the kola grows only in the forest zone, and in Ghana is concentrated in central and northern Ashanti, this has led to the kola nut's appearance as an important trade commodity.<sup>3</sup>

The foregoing analysis of staple food production is mainly concerned with present conditions, but it does serve a number of purposes relevant to the basic theme of this

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>2</sup>Chapter 20 of A. L. U. G., op. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 360-362.





chapter. Food farming is still the most important economic activity in the country, and in terms of methods and regional characteristics has changed little over a long period of time. Hence, the modern picture is quite closely related to that of 1900, and can be drawn upon to illustrate the essential features of the earlier period, for which there is little data concerning the traditional economy. In addition, the outline of the traditional pattern of agriculture provides a framework within which trade and developments in the introduced sector of the economy can be discussed.

## 2. PRODUCTION OF AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES OTHER THAN STAPLE FOODS

Parliament's decision, in 1807, to abolish the slave trade wherever British influence could be exerted seriously disturbed the economy of the Gold Coast, and other parts of West Africa. Although there was considerable delay and difficulty in implementing the appropriate Act,<sup>1</sup> it made illegal nine-tenths of British trade with West Africa.<sup>2</sup> The numerous forts, factories and other establishments maintained by the company of Merchants thus became largely, superfluous. Only the belief of the 'Abolitionists' that a new basis for trade with Africa could be developed prevented the subsequent withdrawal of British interests.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Slave raiding still occurred in the late nineteenth century in the more remote parts of the Colony. See Bevin, op. cit., p. 82.

<sup>2</sup>G. E. Metcalfe, Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History, 1807-1957, London, 1964, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.



In the almost complete absence of alternative trade commodities, however, the problem of securing a new framework for commercial relations between the Gold Coast and Britain defied immediate solution. The London Committee of the Company of Merchants suggested that the export commodities likely to be of greatest importance were " . . . elephants' teeth, gold dust, cotton, indigo, rice, indian corn, palm oil and timber . . . . "<sup>1</sup> By 1816, mahogany and ivory were the Gold Coast's most valuable export commodities, being respectively worth £61,169 and £10,746 in that year.<sup>2</sup> Total exports were valued at £127,320,<sup>3</sup> a mere fraction of the £1,655,042 obtained in the last full year before Abolition.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, great hopes were occasionally entertained for the future of commercial agriculture, despite the disheartening results obtained from a number of experimental projects. Between 1765 and 1783 the Dutch had exported small quantities of cotton from Axim and Shama, where slave labour was employed, but by 1800 the plantations had been finally abandoned.<sup>5</sup> A new plantation, two miles inland from

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>Henry Swanzy, "A Trading Family in the Nineteenth Century Gold Coast," Transactions of the Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society, Vol. 2 (1956), p. 91.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Metcalfe, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>5</sup>Dickson, op. cit., pp. 28-30.





Elmina, was developed between 1810 and 1815, and for a while it appeared to be a success. A good access road was built, from the fort at Elmina, some 35,000 cotton plants were raised, and extra land was cleared for planting coffee. Again, however, the experiment was short-lived and by 1830 the Dutch had lost interest in plantation farming, and were rapidly losing interest in the Gold Coast.<sup>1</sup>

The Danes made even greater efforts to foster commercial agriculture. Model farms were prepared in 1788, near their various forts, and planted with coffee, cocoa and cotton. By the 1790's, such schemes were in existence at Akwapim, Ada, Keta and near Christiansburg, cotton being the principal crop. Some of the farms were developed and managed by Danish botanists, who were given government support. Unfortunately, the projects all suffered from the ravages of local warfare, which not only destroyed the crops but also led to the capture and enslavement of the labour force. Despite the various difficulties, the Danish Government retained its interest in plantation farming and early in the nineteenth century introduced a system of subsidies to attract and encourage planters. Although some of the funds released in this way were misappropriated, a few farms managed to make proper use of them and prolonged their existence. In 1838, when the Government transferred its responsibilities for agriculture to the Basel Mission, there were still eleven separate plantations

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<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.





in operation, all of them being situated close to Accra.<sup>1</sup>

The British attempted less than either the Dutch or the Danes in this field, but were interested in encouraging the export of agricultural commodities. A pilot farm was established about 1804 near Cape Coast, by the Governor, but little came of it.<sup>2</sup> The obstacles proved overwhelming. Quite apart from an African indifference to growing export crops - a factor which may have been over-stressed - there were problems resulting from native poverty, inexperience and low levels of capital accumulation. On the European side, there was a limited commitment to the Gold Coast which tended to inhibit the preparation of long-term objectives. Administrations were under-staffed and under-financed, and were not in a position to compel Africans to take much notice of them, or European principles of law. All of these factors contributed to the formation of a social and political climate not conducive to the development of commerce.

Despite the difficulties involved, further efforts were made during the nineteenth century to found an agricultural base for overseas exports. As several varieties of

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<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

H. Debrunner, "Notable Danish Chaplains on the Gold Coast," Transactions of the Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society, Vol. 2 (1956), p. 15.

C. D. Adams, "Activities of Danish Botanists in Guinea, 1783-1850," Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, Vol. 3 (1957), pp. 30-46.

<sup>2</sup>Dickson, op. cit.



cotton are indigenous to West Africa, and cloth-making is a traditional handicraft industry in many areas, the cultivation and preparation of raw cotton seemed to offer good prospects for development.<sup>1</sup> By 1851 the Napoleon Plantation - originally founded by Governor Torrane<sup>2</sup> - near Cape Coast, was mainly devoted to growing cotton.<sup>3</sup> A similarly specialised plantation was also operating at Winneba. Between 1850 and 1870 cotton exports from the Gold Coast were second, in value, only to those of palm oil, but by the latter date production had become hampered by disease and pests, originating from imported American cotton seed.<sup>4</sup>

The threat to British industry posed by the interruption of cotton supplies during the American Civil War led to a fresh scrutiny of the Empire's cotton potential.<sup>5</sup> Although cotton cultivation was successfully re-introduced in the West Indies during that period,<sup>6</sup> West Africa was not considered suitable for large-scale cotton development.

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<sup>1</sup>Chapter 20 in A. L. U. G., op. cit., pp. 389-390.

<sup>2</sup>Swanzy, op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>3</sup>La Anyane, Ghana Agriculture: Its Economic Development from Early Times to the Middle of the Twentieth Century, London, 1963, p. 50.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 50-54.

<sup>5</sup>E. Helm, "The Cultivation of Cotton in West Africa," Journal of the Royal African Society, Vol. 2 (1902), p. 1.

<sup>6</sup>J. Howard Reed, "Geographical Aspects of the Problems of Empire Cotton Growing," Geographical Journal, Vol. 11 (1911), p. 135.



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Early in the twentieth century, shortages of raw cotton were again prompting British industrialists to canvass the possibility of expanding production within the Empire. Competition from American and European manufacturers had reduced the amount of cotton available to British industry,<sup>1</sup> but world demand conditions did not lead to a resurgence of production in the Gold Coast. African interest in the commercial cultivation of cotton had been dissipated by the spread of cotton diseases. In 1903, it was officially estimated that no more than 200 acres of cotton were still in production; the main areas of cultivation were in Krepi and Krobo.<sup>2</sup>

A number of other commercial crops, for export, were being experimented with at the turn of the century, but none were produced in large quantities. Like cotton, coffee had been grown on the earliest plantations, but in 1900 it was exported only in small amounts.<sup>3</sup> One innovation in the overseas export trade was the appearance of the kola nut, which had been found to possess medicinal properties of value in Europe.<sup>4</sup> However, the demand was for only small quantities of nuts. Several rubber plantations were also in operation, but the bulk of rubber production continued to be

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 129-137.

<sup>2</sup>La Anyane, Ghana Agriculture, op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 55-56.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 58.





obtained by Africans from wild trees.<sup>1</sup>

In terms of subsequent development, the most significant feature of commercial agriculture in 1900 was the export of £27,280 worth of cocoa. Although earlier attempts had been made to establish cocoa farming, its development occurred very late in the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> There is no record of cocoa being exported before 1885, when 121 lbs. were shipped overseas.<sup>3</sup> A second shipment occurred in 1891, and in 1895 some 13 tons were exported. By 1900, exports had increased to 536 tons.<sup>4</sup>

The precise area under cocoa cultivation in 1900 is unknown, but must have been about 50,000 acres.<sup>5</sup> Akwapim, the

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<sup>1</sup>D. Kimble, A Political History of Ghana: The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism, 1850-1928, Oxford, 1963, pp. 33-34.

<sup>2</sup>La Anyane, Ghana Agriculture, op. cit., pp. 37-45.

<sup>3</sup>P. S. Hammond, "Cocoa," Chapter 18 in A. L. U. G., op. cit., p. 252.

<sup>4</sup>W. S. D. Tudhope, "The Development of the Cocoa Industry in the Gold Coast and Ashanti," Journal of the Royal African Society, Vol. 9 (1909), pp. 35-36.

<sup>5</sup>There is a time-lag of seven years between the initial planting of cocoa and its first fruiting. Hence, the production figure - which can be taken to be practically the same as the export figure, since the whole output of cocoa is exported - for 1907 reflects the acreage of cocoa in 1900. Using Szereszewski's cocoa yield rate of 420 lbs. per acre, See Szereszewski, op. cit., Appendix C, the production figure can be projected to give an idea of the acreage. In 1900 the acreage was 49,900 acres. If the average annual production for the years 1906, 1907 and 1908 is used - in order to cancel out the possibility of inclement weather conditions affecting the cocoa yield - then the acreage was 54,050 acres.

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initial nucleus of the industry, remained the principal centre of cocoa farming for many years. The first plantings in Ashanti, which produced 13 per cent of the country's cocoa output by 1920, were not made until 1901 - in Ashanti Akim. In Western Ashanti cultivation began only in 1918.<sup>1</sup> It is also known that, further south, the new industry did not extend west of the Densu River, on a significant scale, until after 1900.<sup>2</sup> In 1900, then, cocoa was confined to the eastern area of the modern Eastern Region, and had possibly extended into the present Volta Region. Akwapim, however, was the core region of cocoa farming.

An interesting feature of the early expansion of cocoa cultivation is that it was largely due to the migration of groups of farmers from particular areas. Most of the best cocoa land within the Colony, in western and northern Akwapim and southern Akim Abuakwa, was purchased by 'stranger-farmers', who were migrants from further east. Much of this land held closed forest and was practically uninhabited before the cocoa farmers arrived. The westward migration began about 1892 and initially involved Akwapim farmers from towns such as Aburi, Mampong, Manife, Akropong and Larteh, many of

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<sup>1</sup>Hammond, op. cit., p. 252.

<sup>2</sup>Polly Hill, "Social Factors in Cocoa Farming," in Chapter 18 in A. L. U. G., op. cit., p. 281.





which were located along the Akwapim Ridge.<sup>1</sup> The usual pattern of the migration was that cocoa farmers would buy land, plant it with seedlings, and then move on to buy more land. They would return to the initial farm in time to harvest the first, and subsequent, crops. In the initial stages, the most popular area for land-purchasing was around Adawaso, east of the Densu River. Within a short time, however, other peoples - including the Shai and the Krobo, who had accumulated capital through palm oil sales - joined the Akwapims, and the migration swelled to such proportions that by shortly after 1900 thousands of farmers were crossing the Densu, searching for new land. Profits from cocoa sales were largely used to buy more land, rendering the migration self-perpetuating.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES

It should be apparent from the earlier parts of this section that the manner in which productive activities have been grouped owes more to convenience of organisation than to the demands of classificatory theory. For example, some extractive industries have been discussed under the heading of 'staple food production' because they are partially involved in that area of the economy. The present subsection, accordingly, is mainly concerned with activities

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<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit. and Idem., The Migrant Cocoa-Farmers of Southern Ghana: A Study in Rural Capitalism, Cambridge, 1963, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit. (both works)





which are not principally involved in staple food production.

Development in the mining field in the late nineteenth century was delayed by a number of restrictive economic conditions, foremost amongst which were transportation problems, and in 1900 had practically come to a standstill. Nevertheless, a substantial part of the framework for development in the twentieth century had been established. Despite the long history of gold-working in the country, modern European mining began quite late in the nineteenth century. In the 1850's a certain Thomas Hughes imported heavy machinery for use in the mines of Western Wassaw but this, the first attempt to introduce Western techniques, was thwarted by the local people, who destroyed the equipment.<sup>1</sup> For many years no one attempted to follow Hughes' example. In the absence of guarantees of protection by the British authorities, even 'risk capital' was reluctant to move into an area which apparently suffered from chronic political instability, and the frequent waging of war. The reluctance of Britain to extend her commitment to the Gold Coast meant that European enterprise, of any form, was usually restricted to the coastal littoral.<sup>2</sup>

Following the Ashanti War of 1873-'74, the situation

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<sup>1</sup>Kimble, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>Bevin, (op. cit., p. 84) views the lack of order over any sizeable area as the most important restriction on economic development.



seemed better, and some mining development occurred. The first concessions to be worked were those awarded to a company formed by M. Bonnat, a Frenchman and an ex-prisoner of the Ashantis, in 1877.<sup>1</sup> Progress was made at Awudua and, later, at Tarkwa, where Bonnat bought the claims of a few African miners. By 1882 there were six European mining companies operating in the Tarkwa-Aboso area, and six years later the number had increased to ten.<sup>2</sup> Much of the work was exploratory, however, and poor results reduced the number of active concerns to six in 1891, when all the working mines were located in the Tarkwa area.<sup>3</sup> Exports of gold were valued at £33,865 in 1880 and £89,981 in 1885.<sup>4</sup> During those years, gold accounted for a little under 10 per cent of the Gold Coast's total overseas exports.<sup>5</sup> Following a late nineteenth century peak of £103,000 in 1889, gold shipments declined during the early 1890's, reaching £77,000 in 1894.<sup>6</sup>

In the aftermath of the 1896 expedition into Ashanti the Colonial Office, with Chamberlain as its head, adopted

<sup>1</sup>Kimble, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>3</sup>Szereszewski, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>4</sup>Annual Report for the Gold Coast, 1902. Extract in Metcalfe, op. cit., p. 530.

<sup>5</sup>Bevin, op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>6</sup>Annual Report for the Gold Coast, 1902. In Metcalfe, op. cit., p. 530.





an uncharacteristically enthusiastic attitude towards economic development in the Gold Coast. Quick to respond to the changed political circumstances, a considerable number, and variety, of European enterprises moved into the Kumasi area.<sup>1</sup> E. A. Cade, a mining prospector, secured mineral rights to 100 square miles of Adansi and Bekwai territory, this being the first concession obtained in Ashanti.<sup>2</sup> In order to gain the support of the Gold Coast Government - which was technically powerless to ratify or reject legal contracts in Ashanti<sup>3</sup> - Cade converted his firm into the Ashanti Goldfields Corporation, in 1897, and made the Government a recipient of royalties. The first mine opened by the new Corporation, at Obuasi in 1898, was also the first modern mine to be established outside the Tarkwa area.<sup>4</sup>

Notwithstanding the benefits likely to accrue to it from Cade's Ashanti venture, the local Administration remained more interested in developing the Colony's resources.<sup>5</sup> To this end, in 1897, the Government even attempted to initiate a public mining project, which would utilise imported Chinese labour, but the scheme was short-lived.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Kimble, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 23-24.

<sup>3</sup>Ashanti was still nominally independent.

<sup>4</sup>E. A. Boateng, A Geography of Ghana, Cambridge, 1959, p. 94.

<sup>5</sup>Kimble, op cit., p. 24.

<sup>6</sup>Loc. cit.





Reports from visiting Transvaal mining authorities contributed to a mood of optimism in connection with Tarkwa's gold potential, and between 1898 and the end of 1901 some four hundred companies were registered as gold-working concerns. Over a longer period, a total of 476 companies, with a nominal capital of £43 millions, registered for gold mining and prospecting in West Africa.<sup>1</sup> Most of them anticipated operating in the Gold Coast.<sup>2</sup>

Very few of the potential gold mining concerns actually made use of their licences, and despite the impressive amount of capital nominally invested, the industry showed surprisingly little sign of material benefit in 1900. The value of gold exports in 1900 and 1901 was £38,000 and £22,000, respectively.<sup>3</sup> The labour force employed by the mines in 1901 consisted of about 6,000 men, whereas a decade earlier the number had been 2,400.<sup>4</sup>

The low level of gold exports around the turn of the century was largely due to the Ashanti crisis of 1900, which caused a general disruption of economic life in the Gold Coast. Another factor of importance was that the mining industry's development was in a temporary state of suspension, pending completion of the Government's railroad from Sekondi

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 24-25.

<sup>2</sup>S. H. Frankel, Capital Investment in Africa, London, 1938, pp. 162-163.

<sup>3</sup>Kimble, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>4</sup>Szereszewski, op. cit., p. 39 and p. 19.



to Tarkwa,<sup>1</sup> upon which work began in 1898 and ended in 1901. Until then, most of the mining companies were content to operate on a care-and-maintenance basis, and to postpone the undertaking of large-scale expansion. The prospect of a railway linking the coast and the major mining area of the country suggested that the industry's most difficult problem, that of transporting heavy and bulky equipment into the interior, would shortly be surmounted. In anticipation, the companies concerned with gold mining increased their expenditure on basic survey work, at the expense of actual production.<sup>2</sup>

The mining of minerals other than gold appears to have been neither significant nor widespread in 1900, and even gold-working seems to have been limited to the European establishments near Tarkwa and at Obuasi.<sup>3</sup> In the Northern Territories there were no substantial mineral deposits to be exploited, although ancient gold diggings have been reported, situated between Masakpe and Kelidu, and near Wasipe.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>2</sup>Annual Report of the Gold Coast for 1902. Extract in Metcalfe, op. cit., p. 529.

<sup>3</sup>Szereszewski, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>4</sup>C. St. B. Shields, "The Western Gonja (Bole) District of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast," Geographical Journal, Vol. 67 (1926), p. 424.

D. H. Jones, "Jakpa and the Foundation of Gonja," Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, Vol. 6 (1962), pp. 3-4.





Elsewhere, a variety of minerals occur, but none were mined, in the modern sense, before World War I. However, it is possible that the small-scale working of iron ores for local purposes was quite common, as it was in Buem.<sup>1</sup>

If the production of rubber and oil-palm items are excluded from this discussion, on the grounds that cultivation was partially responsible for the output of those commodities, then the remaining extractive industry of commercial importance was lumber production. Exports of timber varied considerably in value during the 1890's, attaining a maximum of £110,000 in 1898, but it was consistently a large item in overseas trade.<sup>2</sup> Needless to say, the closed forest zone of the southern Gold Coast supplied the great bulk of lumber. Although wood is of traditional importance in the domestic economy, providing materials for tools, building and fuel, timber production for export purposes began only in 1888. In the early years of the industry's existence, Mahogany was almost the only timber required for export, and its concentration in the South-west contributed substantially to Axim's growth as a port.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the limitation of Mahogany to a small area inland from Axim virtually confined the timber industry to that locality,

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<sup>1</sup>Darkoh, op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>2</sup>Kimble, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>3</sup>A. Foggie and B. Piasecki, "Timber, Fuel and Minor Forest Produce," Chapter 17 in A. L. U. G., op. cit., p. 236.





too; for until 1945, Mahogany provided more than 90 per cent of the Gold Coast's annual lumber exports.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4. MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES

Processing and manufacturing activities were almost wholly confined to the traditional economy, and were dominated by indigenous craft industries and by the relatively simple processing of food products, including fish, staple cereals, root crops, and various vegetables. Secondary industries were thus widely dispersed through the economy and the country. The majority operated at either a community or single household level, serving a family and perhaps its immediate neighbours. In a few cases, however, local or regional specialisation was quite marked in the production of certain items, and where this occurred wider markets were supplied.

The Ewe people, of the South-east, for example, enjoyed a high reputation for their weaving and pottery-work.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, a Gonja specialty was grass-mat making.<sup>3</sup> The Buem area, of then German Togo, specialised in the production of iron implements.<sup>4</sup> Crafts such as canoe-making and ornament production were widely-practised in the southern parts of the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 238-239.

<sup>2</sup>Darkoh, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>3</sup>Shields, op. cit., p. 431.

<sup>4</sup>Darkoh, op. cit., *passim*.



Colony, while the Krobo manufactured soap and a variety of cosmetics.<sup>1</sup> In coastal areas, carpentry, cask-making, lock-making and a host of similar activities were by 1900 firmly established as auxiliary industries of the export trade.<sup>2</sup>

### TRADE

Modern economic theory, whether stemming from Classical or Marxist roots, is essentially based upon Western experience and cultural orientation, and must consequently be of limited applicability to non-Western societies. This is not a novel suggestion, but it has rarely been given the consideration it deserves.<sup>3</sup> One of the more unsatisfactory Western concepts which are commonly applied to the 'underdeveloped' economies is that of 'subsistence.' It may be defined in the following manner:

In subsistence endeavors, each producer lives directly on what he produces. He bends all his efforts to meeting the immediate needs of himself and family and so has little left over for bartering or selling. He and the members of his family must provide the

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<sup>1</sup>Hugo Huber, The Krobo: Traditional Social and Religious Life of a West Africa People, Bonn, 1963, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup>Bevin, op. cit., p. 75.

<sup>3</sup>With the notable exception of scholars with anthropological leanings.

See Theodore W. Schultz, Transforming Traditional Agriculture, Yale, 1964, p. V

Melville J. Herskovits, Economic Anthropology, New York, 1952, pp. 42-64.





food they eat, the clothes they wear, the fuel that warms them, the implements they use, and any items of culture they enjoy.<sup>1</sup>

Even where less explicit use of the concept implies that the individual units of a given society - whether conceived of as single people, families or villages - produce only enough material goods for their own sustenance; a frequent rider is that these social units are economically self-dependent.

In reality, however, so many qualifications need to be added to the notion of a subsistence economy that its utility is very questionable. It can be argued that the concept of subsistence reflects a Western inability to appreciate the economic institutions of alien societies, for it fails to recognise the universal significance of commercial exchange. Even the simplest societies are known to accommodate degrees of labour specialisation, whether in hunting or pot-making, and specialisation necessarily results in the exchange of goods.<sup>2</sup> If it were otherwise, there would be no specialisation, for no one could afford the luxury of concentrating upon only one productive activity.

<sup>1</sup>John W. Alexander, Economic Geography, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1963, pp. 28-29.

<sup>2</sup>For this reason, Yudelman considers that only the most remote and isolated peoples, such as the Kalahari Bushmen, can be regarded as being engaged in genuinely subsistent production.

See M. Yudelman, "Some Aspects of African Agricultural Development," Chapter 20 in Economic Development for Africa South of the Sahara: Proceedings of a Conference Held by the International Economic Association, ed. E. A. G. Robinson, New York, 1964, p. 555.





A particular economy is sometimes held to be not absolutely subsistent but an approximation to the theoretical ideal, which is usually regarded as the antithesis of an integrated commercial economy. In the case of such a 'relatively subsistent' economy, it is allowed that some exchange does occur, but it is considered to be almost accidental. The goods involved are viewed as part of a fortuitous surplus, and their exchange is not considered to detract from the fundamental character of the economy.<sup>1</sup>

The principal objection to this form of reasoning is that it includes an unjustified assumption that members of the more primitive societies of the world are disinterested in producing for the purpose of exchange. Hence, their economic motivation is regarded as being quite different from that of producers in modern, advanced societies. There is sound reason, however, to believe that this is a false contrast, and that the distinction between advanced and simple economies is one of degree rather than principle.<sup>2</sup>

Allan has demonstrated, for example, that the so-called subsistent farmers of Africa regularly produce planned surpluses, failing to do so only in disastrous crop seasons, and

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<sup>1</sup>See Pierre De Schlippe, Shifting Cultivation in Africa, London, 1956, pp. 206-207.

<sup>2</sup>Although not exclusively concerned with this particular issue, a similar argument is proposed by William O. Jones in "Economic Man in Africa," Food Research Institute Studies, Vol. I (1960), pp. 107-134.



that a large part of the 'normal surplus' customarily enters the exchange economy.<sup>1</sup> Again, the universal readiness of underdeveloped peoples to be drawn into the modern economy suggests that their economic condition is the result of the lack of opportunities, not a fundamental indifference to commercial objectives. Moreover, almost without exception, they are familiar with the operation of the commercial exchange process. Indeed, many traditional economies in relatively backward areas feature sophisticated commercial organisations and institutions.<sup>2</sup>

In summary, then, the relevance of the concept of subsistence economy can be challenged on two main grounds. First, it is extremely doubtful that any case can be cited of a society which does not entertain commercial exchange. Second, the implied, or expressly stated, view that 'primitive' societies are antipathetic towards trade has not been demonstrated, and does not appear to have validity. From these points, it can further be argued that the concept misleadingly opposes underdeveloped and developed economies, and that it tends to obscure, or lead to ignoring of, commercial exchange in the less sophisticated economies of the world.

Despite the relatively simple character of the Gold Coast economy in 1900, both internal and external trade were well established. With the exception of those related to

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<sup>1</sup>Allan, op. cit., pp. 38-48.

<sup>2</sup>For clarification, see Markets in Africa, ed. Paul Bohannon and George Dalton, Evanston, Illinois, 1962.





overseas exports and imports, the data required for statistical analyses are lacking. Nevertheless, it is possible to indicate the nature and pattern of the main trade flows within the economy. For this purpose, White's classification of the Gold Coast's exchange economy into three components - local, internal and external trade - provides a useful framework.<sup>1</sup>

'External trade' is a self-explanatory term, which refers to both overseas and overland exports and imports. 'Local trade' is defined as " . . . the satisfaction of the needs of a small community by production within the community,"<sup>2</sup> and 'internal trade' as " . . . [the] movement of produce outside the local community in order to satisfy the needs of another part of the . . . country."<sup>3</sup>

## 1. LOCAL TRADE

The formal manifestation of trading at the local level was to be found in the existence of an intricate system of daily markets. Each town of significance supported a market which catered, on a daily basis, for the trade of the community, and its immediate hinterland. The merchandise offered for sale consisted mainly of general consumer goods, including local foodstuffs and the products of those craft industries in which the community specialised. Some of the larger

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<sup>1</sup>White, op. cit., p. 115.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.





markets would also include goods from other areas of the country, and imported European manufacturers. Essentially, however, the daily markets were concerned with the more utilitarian commodities needed in everyday life.<sup>1</sup>

In the case of the larger urban centres, this, alone, demanded an intricate commercial structure. Kumasi, for example, held a population of about 10,000 people during much of the nineteenth century,<sup>2</sup> and hence required the support of a substantial commercial network just to maintain adequate food supplies. However, the Ashanti towns were particularly well-served, in this respect, by surrounding tributary villages and hamlets.<sup>3</sup> Each town was the political and economic nucleus of a certain area, and required the settlements in its hinterland to supply it with sufficient food. Even in the early part of the nineteenth century, villages up to twenty miles

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<sup>1</sup>See K. B. Dickson, "Trade Patterns in Ghana at the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century," Geographical Review, Vol 56 (1966), pp. 417-419.

<sup>2</sup>K. A. J. Nyarko, "The Development of Kumasi," Bulletin of the Ghana Geographical Association, Vol. 4 (1959), pp. 3-8.

R. W. Steel, "The Population of Ashanti: A Geographical Analysis," Geographical Journal, Vol. 112 (1948), p. 74.

However, war and social disruption in the last quarter of the century meant that in 1901 the population was only 3,000. See William Tordoff, Ashanti Under the Prempehs, 1888-1935, London, 1965, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup>Dickson, "Trade Patterns in Ghana at the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century," op. cit., pp. 420-421.



distant were specialised food producers for the main Ashanti towns.<sup>1</sup>

A different type of specialisation in local trade existed in Buem, where the towns were smaller than in Ashanti. There, the emphasis was on the black-smithing industry. Each village supported its own craftsmen, who supplied the surrounding area with its agricultural implements. Until 1894, Buem was entirely dependent upon the local smiths for its tools and weapons.<sup>2</sup> Thus, there was a lively local trade.

## 2. INTERNAL TRADE

Detailed information relating to internal trade is also rather sparse, even for the modern period.<sup>3</sup> However, commodity exchange has attracted greater interest when large spatial movements have been involved, and it may be that the broad historical patterns of the Gold Coast's internal trade are better understood than are those of its local trade. Somewhat surprisingly, internal trade movements were widely recognised, and commented upon, by the early European explorers and administrators but were neglected, or forgotten, during the first half of the twentieth century, to be re-discovered after 1945.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Dickson, "The Agricultural Landscape of Southern Ghana and Ashanti-Brong Ahafo: 1800 to 1850," op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>2</sup>Darkoh, op. cit., passim.

<sup>3</sup>See White, op. cit., pp. 117-118.

<sup>4</sup>E. K. Hawkins, "The Growth of a Money Economy in Nigeria and Ghana," Oxford Economic Papers, Vol. 10 (1958), p. 340.





The inter-regional trade in foodstuffs has long been an important element in the Gold Coast's internal commerce. At least as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century, for example, Axim, Half Assini and neighbouring towns were sending rice to both eastern coastal areas and to the inland regions of Sefwi and Aowin. Similarly, yams from the important market at Mori were sold throughout the southern part of the country, and Sekondi and Takoradi supplied maize to Shama, Komenda and Elmina.<sup>1</sup>

Essentially the nature and pattern of food commodity flows was determined by regional specialisation in production - whether agricultural or otherwise - and by variations in living standards. Specialisation in agricultural production tended to be encouraged by local or regional peculiarities in the physical environment, which led to the surplus output of a commodity marketable elsewhere. Thus, the unusually moist climate of the South-west favoured rice production on a large-scale, and good markets existed for that crop in other parts of the southern Gold Coast. Similarly, the dry areas of the North and the extreme South-east were less troubled by tsetse-infestation and more amenable to livestock rearing.<sup>2</sup>

Specialisation in economic activities other than

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<sup>1</sup>Dickson, "The Agricultural Landscape of Southern Ghana and Ashanti-Brong Ahafo: 1800 to 1850," op. cit., pp. 25-26.

<sup>2</sup>See Dickson, "Trade Patterns in Ghana at the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century," op. cit., p. 420.





agricultural pursuits meant that certain areas required more food than they, themselves could produce, and that they possessed the means to purchase it from elsewhere. Hence, such areas provided good markets for those regions capable of producing agricultural surpluses. White's study of staple food movements within the Gold Coast, which was undertaken in the mid-1950's, revealed a well established pattern of food deficit and surplus regions.<sup>1</sup>

Not surprisingly, the deficit regions included urban centres and their hinterlands, mining bases with populations greater than 5,000 people, and densely-settled rural areas. Settlements with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants were found able to meet their food requirements from local resources. Regions with significant and regular food surpluses included the forest areas fringing the cocoa-growing centres, and the savannas of northern Ashanti. This would appear to reflect the more favourable physical conditions for traditional food production of the forest zone, so long as cocoa farming was not dominant. In terms of location and ecological status, the Ashanti savannas can be viewed as an appendage of the forest zone.<sup>2</sup> Although cocoa farmers have usually grown most of their own food, the greater economic benefits obtainable

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<sup>1</sup>White, op. cit., passim.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.



from cocoa have meant that the main cocoa areas have not produced substantial food surpluses.<sup>1, 2</sup>

White's study also showed that it is only recently that the North has become involved in the internal trade in staple food crops. Surpluses in northern Ghana, as a whole, are small and irregular, and in some years are converted into deficits. The evidence suggests that in 1900 there was very little movement of foodstuffs - with the exception of livestock - in the Northern Territories. Certainly, no food crops were sent into southern areas of the Gold Coast, although there may have been local movements into northern deficit regions, such as North Mamprusi, from the Salaga area. Some localities, moreover, specialised in supplying towns along the major trade routes with food for the travelling caravans. In view of the poverty prevailing in the Northern Territories, it is also unlikely that foodstuffs moved into the region from southern parts of the country.

On the other hand, at the beginning of the present

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<sup>1</sup>P. Hill, "Three Types of Southern Ghanaian Cocoa Farmer," in African Agrarian Systems, ed. D. Biebyck, London, 1963, pp. 203-224.

<sup>2</sup>In recent times the devastation of the older cocoa areas by swollen shoot disease has tended to cause a renewed interest in food production. See John M. Hunter, "Cocoa Migration and Patterns of Land Ownership in the Densu Valley near Subum, Ghana," Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, No. 33 (1963), p. 69. and Idem., "Akotukrom: A Case Study of a Devastated Cocoa Village in Ghana," Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, No. 29 (1961), pp. 161-168.





century the internal trade in food commodities was undoubtedly well-established in Ashanti and the Colony, where there were many large urban settlements and mining and construction centres. The 1956 study indicated that the major food movement in the South was directed into the Accra district, and that 73.1 per cent of the net inflow into Accra came from forest areas to the North and North-west. It is also clear that the regions east and north-east of Accra are, like northern parts of the country, recent participants in the internal trade in staple food crops. Basically, then, it is probable that in 1900 the main flow of food commodities in the southern Gold Coast was from eastern and central parts of the forest zone towards the coastal savannas, with Accra the focus of convergence. Within Ashanti, the well-knit administrative and economic organisation meant that the larger towns obtained their food requirements from surrounding areas, and long-distance movements were unnecessary.<sup>1</sup>

Of the other commodities which figured prominently in internal trade, one of the more important was kola (kola nut), which Ashanti supplied to the Northern Territories, and areas beyond. "Kola, prolific in the country near the sacred river Tano, was before, and for some time after, 1900, the main export of Ashanti . . . ." <sup>2</sup> Yet another item of

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<sup>1</sup>See Dickson, "Trade Patterns in Ghana at the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century," op. cit., pp. 420-421.

<sup>2</sup>William Tordoff, Ashanti Under the Prempehs, 1888-1935, London, 1965, p. 96.





great significance was salt, a commodity always in demand throughout the country. Ashanti and the interior of the Colony purchased their requirements from the coastal settlements, where salt-making was an ancient activity. North of Ashanti, however, salt was obtained from saline 'soaks' in Daboya.<sup>1</sup> In the eighteenth century a handful of salt was worth a slave in parts of the North, a value which indicates the importance of salt as a trade good.<sup>2</sup> Two commodities which had earlier been of considerable significance in internal trade - gold and slaves - had almost disappeared by 1900. British influence had achieved much in suppressing the slave trade, and traditional methods of gold-working seem to have been faced with insurmountable technological barriers by the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

### 3. EXTERNAL TRADE

In addition to appearing in local trade, kola was also an important overland export commodity. The origin of

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<sup>1</sup>Dickson, "Trade Patterns in Ghana at the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century," op. cit., pp. 422-423.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 423.

<sup>3</sup>In the Tarkwa area, Bonnat's arrival (1877) occurred at a time when the native mines had reached the water table. Since Africans had no pumping equipment, they could not continue with their operations. Elsewhere, alluvial deposits seem to have been thoroughly worked-out.

See E. A. Boateng, "The Tarkwa Goldmining Industry - A Retrospect," Bulletin of the Gold Coast Geographical Association, Vol. 2 (1957), pp. 5-9.





its value has been indicated by Bauer:

The chewing of kola is widespread in Nigeria and in many areas almost universal. It gratifies a habit and acts as a stimulant; its role in these respects may be likened to the combined functions of a cigarette, a cup of coffee and a piece of chewing gum. The kola nut is also of considerable nutritive value, and can sustain life for some time even if no other foods are eaten; it thus serves as a slab of chocolate or a vitamin tablet, and for this reason it is widely used on caravan routes and is consumed in large quantities over the vast areas of French West Africa.<sup>1</sup>

The trade in kola is as antique as that in gold; both commodities moved north into the Sudan as early as the fourteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike gold, however, the bulk of kola production emanated from Ashanti. Although the Ivory Coast and eastern Liberia have shared in the trade, Ashanti is the principal natural source area of the most popular variety of kola.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century Ashanti remained the major producer, and kola was one of the three mainstays of the West African trade with the Sudan, the others being slaves and Kano cloth.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>P. T. Bauer, West African Trade: A Study of Competition, Oligopoly and Monopoly in a Changing Economy, 2nd ed., London, 1963, p. 381.

<sup>2</sup>J. D. Fage, Ghana: A Historical Interpretation, Madison, Wisconsin, 1959, p. 20.

I. Wilks, "A Medieval Trade Route from the Niger to the Gulf of Guinea," Journal of African History, Vol. 3 (1962), pp. 337-341.

<sup>3</sup>A. Adu Boahen, Britain, the Sahara and the Western Sudan 1788-1861, Oxford, 1964, p. 126.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.





In compensation for the traditional northward movement of kola, livestock, another commodity important in both internal and external overland trade, flowed southwards. Although supplemented by an internal movement from the Northern Territories, and by local supplies from the south-eastern coastal plains, most of the cattle sold in Ashanti and the Colony came from the Western Sudan.<sup>1</sup> The volume and age of this overland import trade are unknown,<sup>2</sup> but some of its modern features are quite remarkable. For example, many of the source areas are over 1200 miles distant, in the ex-French Cameroons and Chad.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, the Gold Coast's external overland trade clearly diminished in importance during the nineteenth century, and by 1900 it was worth but a small fraction of the overseas trade. The flow of gold to the North had virtually ceased, and exports of kola were worth only £16,000 in 1891.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, overseas exports of palm oil, alone, were valued at £178,000 in 1901.<sup>5</sup> The decline of the overland external trade partially reflected the increased British involvement in the Gold Coast during the later part of the century, but it also reflected changes within the country which were prompted by local events.

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<sup>1</sup>Szereszewski, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>See Peter R. Gould, The Development of the Transportation Pattern in Ghana, Evanston, Illinois, 1960, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>Bauer, West African Trade, op. cit., p. 383.

<sup>4</sup>Szereszewski, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 47.





It appears that early in the nineteenth century there occurred a fundamental realignment of Ashanti foreign policy, which brought the Confederacy into closer contact with the Europeans on the coast and weakened some of the ties with the North.<sup>1</sup> The reason is obscure but it must have been partly related to the political instability in the Sudan and the Sahara, which left the ancient trade routes unprotected.<sup>2</sup>

The defeat of Ashanti by British forces in 1874 contributed to the decline in northern trade, by weakening the central authority of the Confederacy and encouraging the disaffection of the northern tributary states.<sup>3</sup> Earlier in the century, when Ashanti had been warring with the state of Kong, in the north-eastern part of the Ivory Coast, overland trade had been protected by the simple expedient of re-routing it. Instead of using the ancient north-western path, caravans were directed to the North-east, through Salaga and Yendi into northern Nigeria.<sup>4</sup> After 1874, however, both Yendi and Salaga renounced Ashanti dominion, and civil war within the Confederacy prevented the restoration of Ashanti rule. Trade between Ashanti and the North consequently

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<sup>1</sup>M. Bax, pers. comm.

<sup>2</sup>Boahen, op. cit., pp. 103-131.

E. W. Bovill, The Golden Trade of the Moors, London, 1958, pp. 233-247.

<sup>3</sup>Tordoff, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>4</sup>Wilks, op. cit., p. 341.



suffered from both the fighting and the unsettled political conditions.<sup>1</sup> The visible deterioration of Kumasi in the later part of the century provided a measure of the economic and social distress prevailing throughout Ashanti.<sup>2</sup>

The value of overseas trade in 1900 was greater than ever before, with the exception of the previous year in the case of imports, and the previous two years in the case of the export trade. Exports consisted almost wholly of a small group of primary commodities; rubber and oil palm products were together responsible for about 75 per cent of the total value. All of the principal export items, moreover, were products of the forest zone.

VALUE (in £'000) OF SELECTED GOLD COAST  
OVERSEAS EXPORTS IN 1900<sup>3</sup>

GOLD:	38
RUBBER:	328
COCOA:	27
PALM OIL AND KERNELS:	336
KOLA NUTS:	43
LUMBER:	68
	<u>840</u>
MISCELLANEOUS:	45
TOTAL:	<u>885<sup>4</sup></u>

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<sup>1</sup>Tordoff, op. cit., pp. 15-28.

<sup>2</sup>See Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>From Kimble, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>4</sup>From Metcalfe, op. cit., Appendix D.





In 1900 exports were more valuable than in 1897, but less so than in either 1898 or 1899. They reached even lower levels in the following two years. In part this decline was due to the disruption of economic activity caused by the Ashanti uprising of 1900, the effects of which extended well into 1901. Another factor, as previously mentioned, was that gold production was being held back, in the late 1890's, pending completion of the Sekondi-Tarkwa railway.

However, the export trade in other commodities appears to have suffered from different ailments. Rubber, for example, never regained the prominence it had held in the late 1890's, and until 1907 exports of timber were well below their 1898 level. The Governor of the Gold Coast suggested, in 1904, that in the case of the rubber industry, at least, this was due to the natural slowness with which production was recovering from the damaging effects of the disturbances in 1900.<sup>1</sup> Two years later, however, a Government report expressed alarm at the manner in which both timber and rubber resources were being harmfully exploited.<sup>2</sup> Mahogany, which accounted for practically the whole of timber exports, was being cut prematurely, with damage to the industry's future prospects. This strongly suggests that easily accessible resources of mahogany had been almost exhausted, which would mean that the

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<sup>1</sup>Governor's Statement on the 'State of Trade for 1904' to the Legislative Council of the Gold Coast. Extract in Metcalfe, op. cit., p. 531.

<sup>2</sup>Governor's Statement on the 'State of Trade for 1906' to the Legislative Council of the Gold Coast, in Metcalfe, op. cit., p. 535.





ability of the industry to expand production would be poor until road and railway construction opened new areas.

In the case of the rubber industry, it was charged that the unscientific tapping of trees had resulted in the death and impoverishment of a great many. This factor could have been an important check on the industry's capacity to recover after 1901. After 1906, the world supply of rubber expanded rapidly, causing a reduction in prices which, again, did not favour the Gold Coast industry. The main source of the expanded world output was Malaya, where the value of production rose from £399,000 in 1906 to £5,923,000 in 1910.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the Malayan industry held an advantage in that it was served by an existing good road and rail network, which lowered production costs.<sup>2</sup>

Value of Selected Gold Coast Exports<sup>3</sup>  
(£,000)

	Gold	Rubber	Cocoa	Palm Oil & Kernels	Kola Nuts	Lumber
1893-7 (Average)	83	301	1	266	31	58
1898	64	552	10	365	36	110
1899	51	556	16	289	57	87
1900	38	328	27	336	43	68
1901	22	104	43	268	35	55
1902	97	87	95	368	37	22
1903	255	197	86	251	51	49
1904	346	361	200	215	55	54
1905	597	324	187	167	60	84
1906	822	335	336	206	74	80
1907	1,131	333	515	221	79	169

<sup>1</sup>C. A. Fisher, South-East Asia: A Social, Economic and Political Geography, London, 1964, pp. 598-599.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>D. Kimble, op. cit., p. 39.



Total Gold Coast Exports and Imports<sup>1</sup>  
(£)

	Imports	Exports
1895	924,419	877,304
1896	905,135	792,111
1897	907,670	857,793
1898	1,095,866	1,992,998
1899	1,314,922	1,111,738
1900	1,283,343	885,446
1901	1,795,187	559,733
1902	2,120,433	774,186
1903	2,082,544	980,942
1904	2,001,857	1,340,026
1905	1,486,068	1,646,145

Apart from a very slight recession in 1900, the overseas import trade continued to grow as steadily in the early years of the twentieth century as it had in the later part of the nineteenth century. By 1900 imports were worth £1 $\frac{1}{4}$  millions, about half of which was spent on British goods.<sup>2</sup> The excess of British exports to the Gold Coast over imports from that country brought forth the opinion of one commentator that trade with the Colony was therefore unprofitable, a view which appears strange in the light of modern Britain's chronic balance of payments problem.<sup>3</sup>

Consumer goods accounted for 63 per cent of the value of the Gold Coast's overseas imports in 1900, consisting

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<sup>1</sup>G. E. Metcalfe, op. cit., Appendix D.

<sup>2</sup>J. W. Root, "British Trade with West Africa," Journal of the Royal African Society, Vol. 1 (1901-1902), p. 41.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.





mainly of textiles, spirits, tobacco and foodstuffs.<sup>1</sup> The second largest group of imports, responsible for 21 per cent of expenditure upon incoming products, contained capital goods - construction materials, machinery and various items required by the introduced sector of the economy.<sup>2</sup> The relatively high proportion of capital goods mainly reflected activities in mining and railroad construction.<sup>3</sup>

#### SUMMARY

In 1900 the economy of the Gold Coast possessed a firm, though impoverished, traditional basis. The range of productive activities was no smaller, but political change had stopped the important income flow formerly generated by certain categories of external commerce. During the nineteenth century British action had suppressed the highly lucrative maritime slave trade, and political turmoil within the Sudan and, later, within Ashanti had conspired to disrupt the ancient pattern of northern trade. By the end of the century, coastal areas had had time to adapt to these changes, unlike Ashanti and the Northern Territories, and the modern sector of the economy had established significant growth points within the Colony.

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<sup>1</sup>Szereszewski, op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

mainly of fishing, whiting, lobster and haddock. The  
second largest group of industries is agriculture. The  
of agriculture and fishing is about 10% of the total  
goods - construction materials, agriculture, services, etc.  
required by the industrial sector is the main  
relatively high proportion of capital goods and services  
activities in mining and other industries.

Summary

In 1955 the output of the gold mines was  
low, though improved, compared with 1954. The main  
production activities were in mining, the gold mines  
and the other important sectors. The economy was  
mainly dependent on mining and services. The main  
growth came from mining and services. The main  
five sectors were mining, services, and agriculture. The  
other and, later, services and construction. The  
the main sector of industry was the gold mines. The  
activity, which was the main sector of industry.  
main sector and the services sector. The main  
sector of the economy was mining and services. The  
sector was the main sector.

Investment, 1955, p. 13  
1955  
1955



Modern mining and railroad construction were providing paid employment and substantial capital imports by 1900, and the whole level of economic activity was consequently in the process of being raised, in southern parts of the Gold Coast. Although the export trade had been growing steadily for some time, the appearance of cocoa as a regular export item was highly significant. By 1900 cocoa cultivation was firmly established in the Colony, and it was rapidly emerging as a major agent of economic growth. Perhaps the most important feature of cocoa production was that it was well suited to making efficient use of the country's available resources - land and labour - and did not suffer from the capital shortages which usually hinder growth in underdeveloped economies.<sup>1</sup> In addition, cocoa farming developed within the Gold Coast as an African enterprise; unlike the modern gold mining industry, it was not an extension of the British economy. Profits from cocoa production remained in the Gold Coast, and partially served to finance further development.

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<sup>1</sup>See Szereszewski, op. cit., Chapter 7.



THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

OF THE UNITED STATES

PART

TWO





## CHAPTER V

### BRITISH RULE AND THE GOLD COAST

#### ECONOMY, 1900 - 1939

#### THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

Although increasingly more flexible than during the Victorian era, the traditional British policy of minimum state intervention in colonial economies was dominant in the period up to World War II.<sup>1</sup> It was held that colonial governments should principally concern themselves with establishing and maintaining political security and the rule of law. If these conditions were guaranteed, then private enterprise could be expected to ensure the economic development of a particular territory. The involvement of the state, whether through the British or Colonial Government, was considered to be undesirable and generally unnecessary, and could be tolerated only in the event of critical problems being left unsolved, due to the limitations of private

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<sup>1</sup>See David E. Carney, Government and Economy in British West Africa: A Study of the Role of Public Agencies in the Economic Development of British West Africa in the Period 1947-1955, New York, 1961, pp. 91-94.

W. K. Hancock, Problems of Economic Policy, 1918 - 1939, Vol. 2, Pt. 2, in Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs, London, 1940, pp. 263-269.

M. Fortes, "The Impact of the War on British West Africa," International Affairs, Vol. 21 (1945), p. 212.

Lord Hailey, An African Survey: Revised 1956, London, 1957, p. 203.

INTRODUCTION AND THE OVERVIEW1900-1905 - 1905-1910THE POLITICAL SITUATION

Although imperialism was already well advanced in the late 19th century, the traditional British policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries was still maintained. It was only in the period up to World War I that colonial governments were gradually introduced with increasing and maintained political power and the rule of law. In these conditions were favourable for private enterprise which was regarded as the main source of development of a particular country. The traditional policy of non-interference was replaced by a policy of non-interference in the state, which allowed the British to control the economy and considered as an undesirable and generally unnecessary and could be tolerated only in the case of internal problems being left involved due to the traditional policy of non-interference.

The David S. Landes, *Unsettled Frontier*, pp. 15-16  
1900-1905 - 1905-1910  
1910-1915 - 1915-1920  
1920-1925 - 1925-1930  
1930-1935 - 1935-1940  
1940-1945 - 1945-1950  
1950-1955 - 1955-1960  
1960-1965 - 1965-1970  
1970-1975 - 1975-1980  
1980-1985 - 1985-1990  
1990-1995 - 1995-2000  
2000-2005 - 2005-2010  
2010-2015 - 2015-2020  
2020-2025 - 2025-2030  
2030-2035 - 2035-2040  
2040-2045 - 2045-2050  
2050-2055 - 2055-2060  
2060-2065 - 2065-2070  
2070-2075 - 2075-2080  
2080-2085 - 2085-2090  
2090-2095 - 2095-2100



enterprise.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, faith in the ability, and willingness, of private enterprise to pursue all of those economic objectives considered desirable was not as strong as it had been in the nineteenth century. In 1903, for example, the controversial issue of 'free trade versus imperial preference,' which had been gathering momentum during the last years of Victoria's reign, returned to the forefront of British politics, with Chamberlain's resignation from the Cabinet in order that he might lead the campaign against free trade. The eventual success of this campaign, in 1932,<sup>2</sup> demonstrated the rejection of the notion that it was in Britain's interest to avoid Government interference with international trade. Similarly, the social reforms introduced into Britain by the Liberals, before the First World War, gave the state a greatly expanded area for legitimate economic activity. Changes such as these affected not only Britain, but inevitably influenced the management of colonial affairs.<sup>3</sup> They

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<sup>1</sup>Symptomatic of this feeling was Lugard's criticism of the Empire Resources Development Committee on the grounds that it represented an attack on private enterprise. Amongst other policies, the Committee had advocated greater state control of imperial resources. See F. D. Lugard, "The Crown Colonies and the British War Debt," The Nineteenth Century and After, Vol. 88 (1920), p. 244.

<sup>2</sup>Imperial preference was accepted at the Ottawa Conference of that year. See Hancock, op. cit., Pt. 1, pp. 215-230.

<sup>3</sup>See Hailey, op. cit., p. 203.  
F. M. Bourret, Ghana: The Road to Independence, 1919-1957, Stanford, 1960, pp. 116-117.



stimulated a new level of awareness of the potential for Government action in the social and economic fields, helped bring forth recognition of the limitations of private enterprise and, later, tended to provide support for the view that the metropolitan country should contribute directly to colonial development.

During the 1914-'18 War many new, or unorthodox, thoughts on the subject of the British Empire gained wide circulation, encouraging further the re-examination of traditional colonial policies. One resultant product was the formation, in late 1916, of the Empire Resources Development Committee (the E. R. D. C.), an unofficial organisation which included figures from many areas of public life.<sup>1</sup> The immediate inspiration of the E. R. D. C. was the grave alarm, amongst its members, over the National Debt, which had revealed an astonishing propensity for growth during the early part of the War. The Committee believed that the National Debt should not be paid by imposing a heavy burden of taxation upon the British public, but by 'creating' new sources of wealth through developing the resources of the Empire. For this purpose it was proposed that the British Government should manage a series of commercial projects, throughout the Empire, with the objective of making a profit.

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<sup>1</sup>For details of the E. R. D. C.'s organisation and objectives see H. Wilson-Fox the Honorary Secretary, "The Development of the Empire's Resources, Nineteenth Century and After, Vol. 85 (1917), pp. 835-858.





The Committee's suggestions were heavily criticised at many points by economists, business interests and various humanitarian pressure groups.<sup>1</sup> There were charges that the state could never manage commercial undertakings successfully and, from another point of view, that the adoption of such policies would amount to the abrogation of moral principle, in the colonial Empire, in favour of a programme of blatant exploitation. In addition, the British Government did not view the E. R. D. C.'s proposals with favour.<sup>2</sup>

Despite widespread criticism of the E. R. D. C., two bases of its recommendations were independently gaining support. By the end of World War I, it was generally believed that more should be done to encourage economic development within the Empire, although the means to that end were not clear.<sup>3</sup> Through Government sponsoring of projects such as railroad construction, in many dependencies, it was also

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<sup>1</sup>See E. Lugard, op. cit., pp. 239-255.

Memorandum of the Association of West African Merchants in the Economist, 22 December, 1917.

<sup>2</sup>The Government attitude emerged during the course of Parliamentary debates. See Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th Series, Vol. 112 (13 February, 1919), cols. 408-433.

<sup>3</sup>Lugard stressed that his objections to the proposals of the E. R. D. C. rested upon the fact that such policies would amount to colonial exploitation. With regard to the repayment of the 'War Debt', he rather vaguely suggested that the colonies should be asked to 'volunteer' their share. Development of colonial resources would, however, be necessary if this were to come about. See Lugard, op. cit., pp. 250-252.





becoming clear that the state could, and perhaps should, usefully contribute more than had previously been assumed. The establishment of a Colonial Development Fund, by the United Kingdom Government, in 1929, tended to assist in the formalisation of post-War thought on colonial development. Although much more modest than the schemes advocated by the E. R. D. C., the Fund was intended to be used to sponsor small-scale development projects within the colonies.<sup>1</sup> It was also hoped that construction within the Empire would create work for Britain's unemployed. Until 1929, however, colonial dependencies were expected to be financially self-supporting, and to be able to pay for their own administrative and development expenditure. Special circumstances might justify the floating of a loan upon the money market, but the Imperial Exchequer could not be called upon to underwrite either its repayment or the payment of interest upon the sum initially borrowed. Although temporary financial deficits incurred through the costs of normal administration could be balanced by the British Treasury, the metropolitan Government was not prepared to provide funds for development purposes. There were occasional exceptions, but these general rules were usually adhered to, and the small sums allocated for colonial development under the 1929 Act did not substantially alter the picture.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Between 1929 and 1940 £5,000,000 were paid from this fund to the various dependencies.

See Hancock, op. cit., Pt. 2, Appendix D.

<sup>2</sup>Carney, op. cit., Chapter 6.

Hailey, op. cit., pp. 202-203.



GOVERNMENT AND TRANSPORTATION

Even before the decision to extend British rule over the whole of the country had been taken, the local and metropolitan Governments had decided that the field of transportation development was a legitimate area for state intervention in the Gold Coast's economy. However, state action did not constitute unwarranted interference, in this case. In view of the reluctance of the private sector to undertake large-scale transportation improvements, the Government was more or less obliged to assume responsibility for such development. For some time both European and African business groups in the country had been urging the local Administration to adopt this view.<sup>1</sup>

The inadequacy of existing transportation facilities to accommodate economic growth was a controversial issue which had emerged in the later 1880's. The occasion for its development was a trade recession, between 1885 and 1890,<sup>2</sup> during the course of which the Gold Coast Government was widely criticised for its handling of the Colony's

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<sup>1</sup>G. E. Metcalfe, ed., Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History, 1807-1957, London, 1964, p. 427.

Lugard, an adamant critic of unjustified state interference in colonial economies, maintained that colonial governments were seldom more useful than in the role of railroad builders. See F. D. Lugard, The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa, 5th ed., London, 1965, pp. 499-501.

<sup>2</sup>See Metcalfe, op. cit., Appendix D.





economy. Mercantile interests within Britain and the Gold Coast petitioned the Colonial Office,<sup>1</sup> alleging that the local Administration had shown only apathy in the face of a serious decline in trade. In particular, the colonial Government had neglected to attempt to improve trade roads, the major arteries of transportation and commerce.<sup>2</sup> A similar complaint was registered by the authors of the Report on Economic Agriculture, published in 1889. Thus:

The principal reason for the neglect of native products is the difficulty of transporting cumbersome goods, which arises from the want of roads as, too often, the vendor, having collected his produce and brought it to market, finds the value is swallowed up by the cost of transport . . . .<sup>3</sup>

Again:

The first step towards developing the resources of the country must be the establishment of good roads between the producing districts and the ports of shipment . . . .<sup>4</sup>

The Report also pointed out that the existing 'roads' were in reality seldom more than narrow, tortuous bush tracks, and that "nowhere in the Colony are there to be found roads fit for carriage traffic."<sup>5</sup> Conditions were certainly poor

<sup>1</sup>e.g. Petition from the Manchester Chamber of Commerce to the Colonial Office, 8 February, 1887, and Petition of the Cape Coast Chiefs, 18 May, 1887, in Metcalfe, op. cit., Chapter 26.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, C. 5897, "Report on Economic Agriculture on the Gold Coast," 1889, extracts in Metcalfe, op. cit., pp. 434-437.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Loc. cit.





but some improvements had been effected during the preceding fifteen years.<sup>1</sup> Soon after 1874 the Administration had begun encouraging villagers along trade routes to maintain the principal roads in decent repair. As an inducement, an unofficial system of payments and fines, for work accomplished or neglected, was established.<sup>2</sup> In the five-year period from 1880 to 1885, a little more than £11,000 was expended on road improvement, through the levy system and other means.<sup>3</sup> The results were modest, " . . . but the clearing and maintenance operations required for such a system represented a marked improvement over the old haphazard attempts."<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, there is little doubt that in 1889 roads were poor and suitable only for head-portage, virtually the sole method of transportation at the time.<sup>5</sup> The main alternative to head-loading was the water-borne traffic found on the Volta, Tano and Ankobra Rivers. By the early 1880's steam launches were being employed on the lower Volta. The Basel Mission, Miller Brothers and Messrs. Swanzy all operated

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<sup>1</sup>Metcalfe, op. cit., p. 427.

<sup>2</sup>Peter R. Gould, Development of the Transportation Pattern in Ghana, Northwestern University Studies in Geography, No. 5, Evanston, 1960, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup>H. J. Bevin, "The Gold Coast Economy about 1880," Transactions of the Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society, Vol. 2 (1956), p. 77.

[The total revenue for the Colony in that period was £583,302. See Metcalfe, op. cit., Appendix D.]

<sup>4</sup>Gould, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>5</sup>Bevin, op. cit., p. 76.





commercial services between Amedica, the river port for Akuse, and Ada, the main transshipment point for ocean-bound goods. In addition, the Government used steam launches in the same area for administrative purposes. Similarly, the Effluenta Company ran a small launch service up the Ankobra to Bousa, for the benefit only of the mining companies. Canoe traffic used many of the Gold Coast's rivers, particularly the Tano and the Volta, but the great bulk of trade goods moved over land, even near the rivers.<sup>1</sup>

Governor Griffith was not unaware of the restrictive effect on the economy of poor transportation facilities, but he disagreed with the authors of the 1889 Report, arguing that better roads would not solve the problem: " . . . Roads alone will be very little use because draught animals will not live on the Gold Coast."<sup>2</sup> He maintained that significant improvement would await the construction of railways; without vehicles to use them, new roads could not justify their cost.<sup>3</sup>

Even so, an Inspector of Trade Roads was appointed in the following year - 1890 - and a new road constructed between Anyako and Beyive,<sup>4</sup> despite Griffith's lack of enthusiasm. In 1894, at the Colonial Office's insistence, a Roads

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 77-78.

<sup>2</sup>Griffith to Knutsford [Secretary of State for the Colonies], 10 November, 1890; quoted in Metcalfe, op. cit., p. 437.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Gould, op. cit., pp. 13-15.





Department was established, and work immediately began on the construction of more new roads and a variety of maintenance work.<sup>1</sup> One large project was the re-building of the road from Cape Coast to Kumasi, between 1895 and 1900. Another was the construction of a major routeway from Accra to Apedwa.<sup>2</sup> By 1903 there were 229 miles of main trade roads, constructed and maintained by the Public Works Department, which had absorbed the Roads Department in 1896, in existence in the Colony (excluding Ashanti and the Northern Territories).<sup>3</sup>

A remarkable development which accompanied the road improvement programme of the 1890's was the growth of barrel-rolling as an important mode of transportation.<sup>4</sup> It became particularly significant in the palm oil and cocoa producing districts, where it provided a means of using the new and modified roads intended to facilitate trade. In the usual absence of wheeled vehicles and pack-animals, barrel-rolling was advantageous in that it was both less expensive and required less labour than head-loading.<sup>5</sup> For similar reasons

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<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>4</sup>Bevin, op. cit., p. 76.

<sup>5</sup>A barrel of palm oil typically weighed 17.75 cwts. and three men could manage two barrels; on uphill slopes, all three would roll one barrel at a time. The cost averaged 14.5 pence per ton mile. Head-loads usually weighed 60 lbs. each, and the cost of head-portage was between 30 and 60 pence per ton mile. See Gould, op. cit., p. 25, and David A. Kimble, A Political History of Ghana: The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism, 1850-1928, London, 1963, p. 26.





it was preferable to transportation by canoe.<sup>1</sup>

While useful in the context of the traditional economy, however, barrel-rolling could do little more than ease the basic problems. It required good, and hence expensive, roads, was time-consuming, and still an inordinately expensive mode of transport. The high cost of carrying goods meant that only a small area of the Gold Coast - mainly the southern fringes of the forest zone - could profitably send merchandise to the coastal markets. Conversely, the interior range of imported goods was small. Hence, production for export and external trade were severely restricted and, in turn, there was little prospect of Government revenue, which came mainly from external trade, increasing substantially. Even the production of high-value mineral exports was limited by transportation problems. Mining companies were unable to obtain the heavy and bulky machinery needed for modern operations on a large-scale. Most of their equipment had to be reduced to 50 lb. loads, on the coast, and head-carried inland, a method which was unsatisfactory, unduly expensive, and not always physically possible.<sup>2</sup> During the 1890's, therefore, the Gold Coast's transportation system provided

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<sup>1</sup>Gould, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Chapter 2.

R. J. Harrison Church, "The Pattern of Communications in British West Africa," in Geographical Essays on British Tropical Lands, (ed.) Steel, R. W. and Fisher, C. A., George Philip and Son Ltd., London, 1956, p. 63.



an ideal example of a 'bottleneck' resisting economic growth.<sup>1</sup>

Road improvements were welcome, but their high cost and the continued absence of means of using roads, other than by direct human labour, were limiting factors; and even when built, roads were expensive to maintain.<sup>2</sup> Griffith's open advocacy of rail transport, from 1890 onwards, combined with mounting pressure from business interests, particularly the mining companies, to produce a popular demand for railroad construction.<sup>3</sup> It seemed to many that railways were necessary not only for growth in the mining and external trade sectors, but for the general economic and social development of the country. The funds to provide social amenities, especially education and medical services, could only come from Government

<sup>1</sup>The term 'bottleneck' refers to " . . . a shortage which the price system is not remedying." See Charles P. Kindleberger, Economic Development, London, 1958, p. 160.

<sup>2</sup>Although the most expensive roads built in the Gold Coast during the 1890's cost only £227 per mile, as opposed to £10,314 per mile for the early railways, they could often be more expensive to maintain than railways. Perhaps a more important point is that a great many miles of road were built which, in the absence of wheeled vehicles, did not substantially improve transportation facilities. For cost figures see Gould, op. cit., p. 15 and p. 24. The relative merits of railways and roads are discussed in Church, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>3</sup>Kimble, op. cit., pp. 26-29.

Gould, op. cit., p. 22.

F. J. Pedler, Economic Geography of West Africa, London, 1955, p. 114.

Metcalfe, op. cit., pp. 437-39.





revenue which, in turn, could be significantly increased only if the economy could operate at a higher level.

Similar campaigns were afoot elsewhere in colonial Africa, but the demand for railways was not inspired by economic considerations alone. Much of the pressure arose from the need of a colonial power to demonstrate its effective occupancy of a particular territory, a condition which it had been decided at the Berlin Conference<sup>1</sup> should accompany claims to title. To the benefit of many parts of the African Continent, railway development came to be regarded as clear - though expensive - evidence of 'effective occupancy.'<sup>2</sup>

Yet another argument in favour of railway construction in the Gold Coast was provided by French activity north of Ashanti, during the 1890's, which threatened long-cherished British interests, and the economic viability of the coastal settlements. The Gold Coast Colony's future seemed to depend upon the securing of a large hinterland, preferably with markets and resources, the alternative being another Gambian situation. Without a railroad, however, possession of the Northern Territories would not be immediately advantageous; the North would be difficult to administer and

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<sup>1</sup>That is the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885.

<sup>2</sup>Hailey, op. cit., pp. 1546-73 and p. 1537.

R. J. Harrison Church, "The Evolution of Railways in French and British West Africa," Compte Rendu du 16 Congrès International de Géographie, Lisbonne, 1949 [pub. 1952], Vol. 4, p. 96.





defend, and would probably continue to lie well inland of the commercial frontier. In turn, it would hence be awkward to substantiate claims to have effectively occupied the Northern Territories.

The decision of the British Government to build railways in East Africa and Nigeria improved the Gold Coast's prospect of similar development,<sup>1</sup> particularly since the potential of the local gold mining industry meant that "nowhere else in West Africa was there such an assured traffic for a railway."<sup>2</sup> In 1895 the first tentative discussion of the case for a Gold Coast railway occurred between Lord Ripon, Secretary of State for the Colonies, and a group of West African merchants.<sup>3</sup> Within a few months, however, Chamberlain succeeded Ripon at the Colonial Office and immediately associated himself with the lobby for Gold Coast railway development. The new Colonial Secretary made public his faith in the economic worth of colonial railroads,<sup>4</sup> and his belief that they could be best built - in terms of time, convenience and expense - by public enterprise. In this he was supported by experienced administrators from many

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<sup>1</sup>Hailey, op. cit., pp. 1546-73.

<sup>2</sup>Church, "The Pattern of Communications in British West Africa, op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>3</sup>Kimble, op. cit., pp. 28-29.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.



parts of the Empire, including Lord Lugard.<sup>1</sup>

In 1898 work finally began on the line from Sekondi to Tarkwa, which had been surveyed in 1896, and the Gold Coast's first railway was completed in 1901.<sup>2</sup> It was financed by Government loans, initially obtained from the United Kingdom Treasury at a specially low interest rate of  $2\frac{3}{4}$  per cent. Later, development was to be contingent upon the local Administration being able to raise funds on the open money market, where interest rates were appreciably higher. Under the 1898 Railway Loan Ordinance it was arranged that provision for repaying loans and interest would be made from a sinking fund.<sup>3</sup> Initially, Chamberlain hoped that repayment could be ensured by the imposition of direct taxation, but popular agitation and resistance to his proposal led quickly to the abandonment of the idea.<sup>4</sup>

Although only 40 miles in length, the Sekondi-Tarkwa railway was almost three years in construction, occasioning

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 28-30.

Lugard, The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa, op. cit., pp. 461-76.

<sup>2</sup>Gould, op. cit., p. 22.  
Kimble, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>3</sup>Kimble, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

Local opposition, in the Gold Coast, to direct taxation dated from the mid-nineteenth century, and endured until World War II.

See Kimble, op. cit., Chapter IV and pp. 306-315.  
Bourret, op. cit., p. 152.





critical comment in Britain. However, the problems to be overcome were unusually difficult, even for Africa. The main physical obstacle was provided by the dense forest cover of the south-west, which hindered surveying and proved costly and time-consuming to clear. In addition, heavy rainfall caused construction delays and meant that good ballast material, which was not obtainable in the immediate area, was necessary for laying the tracks. The absence of modern docking facilities resulted in valuable equipment and materials being lost in the Sekondi surf, during the one-mile journey by lighter from off-loading vessels to the coast. Accidents at sea, including the wrecking and grounding of ships carrying equipment for construction, increased the causes of delay. Finally, the Ashanti uprising led to the flight of a labour force which had always been in short supply.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the line was completed and plans were immediately laid for extending it to Kumasi.

The Ashanti Goldfields Corporation, anxious to have its mine at Obuasi connected to the coast by rail, guaranteed the railway authority an annual revenue of £30,000, a guarantee which was never, in fact, needed.<sup>2</sup> However, the

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<sup>1</sup>Church, "The Evolution of Railways in French and British West Africa," op. cit., pp. 96-97.

Fred Shelford [one of the civil engineers responsible for building the line], "On West African Railways," Journal of the Royal African Society, Vol. 1 (1901-02), pp. 339-54.

<sup>2</sup>Church, "The Pattern of Communications in British West Africa," op. cit., p. 65.





main inspiration for the extension to Kumasi was the Government's desire to be able to transfer troops to Ashanti with a minimum of delay, a factor of great importance after the experiences of 1900.<sup>1</sup> To speed construction, 1500 labourers were contracted from Sierra Leone, and, under favourable conditions, the line was completed in 1903.<sup>2</sup> A sobering reflection upon the haste with which work on the Gold Coast's first railway proceeded was provided in 1922, when £2 millions were spent on realigning the tracks, an adjustment made necessary by the inadequacy of the original surveys. The initial cost of the Sekondi-Kumasi railway was £1½ millions.<sup>3</sup>

It has been noted elsewhere that apart from the relatively high cost, in African terms,<sup>4</sup> a special feature of the Sekondi-Kumasi railway was its early profitability.<sup>5</sup> Even in the first year of operation a profit was registered. In the early period 98 per cent of the traffic was northward-bound, most of the cargoes consisting of mining equipment which had been held back by the mining companies, pending

<sup>1</sup>Gould, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Shelford, op. cit., p. 348.

<sup>3</sup>Church, "The Pattern of Communications in British West Africa," op. cit., p. 66.

<sup>4</sup>The average cost of construction in the Gold Coast was £10,314 per mile. This compared with figures of £7,064 in Nigeria and £4,316 in Sierra Leone. See Gould, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>5</sup>Loc. cit.

Church, "The Pattern of Communications in British West Africa," op. cit., pp. 63-65.





completion of the railway. However, other imports also used the line.<sup>1</sup> A highly significant feature of the railroad was its capacity to generate new commodity flows, particularly in the internal trade of the country, through the lowering of transportation costs.

Lugard's estimate that one train of 'average capacity' was equal to 13,000 head carriers at one-twentieth the cost also brings out the tremendous impact of rail transportation.<sup>2</sup>

Although the new railway thus proved very beneficial to the mining concerns and certain categories of trade, it had little effect upon the export trade in vegetable commodities. The main centres of cocoa production and the collection of oil palm items were in the eastern parts of the forest zone, where transportation problems still restricted expansion. To correct this imbalance work was begun, in 1907, on a second main railway, extending inland from Accra. In the same year a branch line from Tarkwa to Prestea was started. By 1911 the Prestea extension, which was intended to assist the mining industry, was complete and the Accra line had reached Pakro. The latter had been further extended to Koforidua before wartime shipping shortages caused a scarcity of materials and the suspension of construction. Following World War I, work regained momentum, though hampered by financial stringency during the trade recession of

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<sup>1</sup>Gould, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.





1920-1922, and the Accra line was finally linked with Kumasi in 1923. The only other major railroad project undertaken prior to 1939 was the construction of a line between Huni Valley, near Tarkwa, and Kade, in the Central Province of the Colony. It was built in the years from 1923 to 1927.<sup>1</sup>

Having launched into a railway development programme, the local Administrator did not neglect road improvement, although funds for that purpose were relatively scarce. The 1894 Trade Roads Ordinance gave legal sanction to the system of financial inducements and penalties, through which local roads were kept in reasonable repair.<sup>2</sup> In 1896 the Public Works Department incorporated the short-lived Roads Department, and became responsible for the main trade roads. Capital for the expenses involved in road development was provided from the Colony's revenues, a factor which tended to restrict the work undertaken. It was primarily the shortage of funds - plus the concomitant uncertainty over which projects should be given priority - which led to the suspension of work on the Great North Road, from Kumasi to Tamale, for several years in 1912.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to being responsible for constructing the

<sup>1</sup>See Gould, op. cit., Chapters 3 and 4.

Church, "The Pattern of Communications in British West Africa," op. cit., and "The Evolution of Railways in French and British West Africa," op. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Kimble, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>Gould, op. cit., Chapters 2, 3 and 4.





railways and roads, the Gold Coast Government also retained responsibility for their subsequent management. The railroads were governed by a public agency, and run as a profit-making enterprise. As such, they provided a new and welcome addition to the Government's sources of revenue.<sup>1</sup> It was also anticipated that the railways would encourage a large expansion of external trade and thereby, through customs duties, also contribute indirectly to an increase in revenue. In view of the chronic shortage of capital funds, the railways, thus, were of considerable financial importance, quite apart from their significance as carriers of goods.

Until 1929, when the net revenue from the railways reached £644,566,<sup>2</sup> the results of railway development were very encouraging, in terms of general economic development and Government revenue growth. Although the Northern Territories had not shared the good fortune of southern parts of the country, Ashanti and the Colony had been effectively drawn into the international economy through the growth of cocoa and gold production,<sup>3</sup> industries which had found the railways to

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<sup>1</sup>See: Speech of Sir Hugh Clifford [Governor] on the 'State of Trade' in 1912, to the Legislative Council of the Gold Coast, 3 October, 1913, in Metcalfe, op. cit., pp. 544-48.

Clifford estimated that the revenue for 1914 would be £1,387,000, and that the railways would contribute £396,000 of this sum.

<sup>2</sup>Gould, op. cit., p. 58. Total revenue in that year was £4,703,967.

See Metcalfe, op. cit., Appendix D.

<sup>3</sup>See Gould, op. cit., p. 38.



be of critical value. The process of economic growth was sharply halted by the Great Depression, which began to affect the Gold Coast in 1930.<sup>1</sup> With the slump in foreign trade, upon which the railways depended heavily for cargoes, railway revenues declined and from 1930 to 1936 the surpluses were converted into deficits. A high proportion of fixed costs - which had to be paid regardless of the volume of goods carried - placed the railways at a great disadvantage in comparison with road hauliers. From 1936 to 1939 the railways were able to earn modest revenue surpluses, as trade slowly recovered.<sup>2</sup>

An important result of the Depression, in the Gold Coast, was that it enabled road transport to become established as a serious competitor with the railways, a situation which had been developing for many years. Motor lorries were first introduced to the country in 1912, and although rather unreliable and very damaging to the existing roads, they gradually grew in numbers. The introduction of the very durable Ford trucks, during the First World War, contributed to the growing popularity of motorised road vehicles. The new trucks were simple to maintain, and had light-weight chassis and pneumatic tyres, which were viewed favourably since they inflicted less wear and tear on the roads. In an attempt

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.





to aid the establishment of a road 'feeder' service for the railways, the Government instituted special low duty rates on motor fuels.<sup>1</sup>

By the 1920's, however, lorries had begun to compete with the railways,<sup>2</sup> instead of supplying a simple 'feeder' service, and the railroad authorities resorted to manipulating freight charges in order to stave off the competitive pressure. Between 1923 and 1929, nevertheless, the Accra railway carried a proportion of cocoa exports which dropped from 83 to 63 per cent. Drastically reduced carriage charges allowed the railway to maintain the 1929 level for a while,<sup>3</sup> but further ground was lost during the main years of the Depression. Road haulage suffered far less than the railways during the early 1930's, partly due to lower fixed costs, and partly because road hauliers had neither fixed timetables nor fixed routes to contend with; they could be more flexible than the railways in searching for loads. In a particularly bad period moreover, lorries could be withdrawn from service and garaged, at very little cost. From the mid-1930's to the outbreak of World War II, road transport retained its competitive status with the railways.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 66-72.

Also, see Sir Hugh Clifford's speech in the Legislative Council, 28 October, 1918. Extract in Metcalfe, op. cit., pp. 569-70.

<sup>2</sup>R. J. Harrison Church, West Africa: A Study of the Environment and of Man's Use of It, 4th ed., London, 1963, p. 154.

<sup>3</sup>Gould, op. cit., p. 53.





The expansion of the Gold Coast's road system, the introduction of motorised road vehicles, and the development of a rail network facilitated a large increase in the volume of trade, both internal and external, but also helped to establish a new bottleneck on the coast. Expecially in the absence of natural harbours, port facilities proved to be anomalously poor once the inland transportation system had been improved. All commodities involved in overseas trade were carried by surf boats to, and from, ocean-going vessels which lay off-shore. So far as natural advantages were concerned, the differences between the various sites were small, and at the close of the nineteenth century, the country was served by more than 30 surf ports.<sup>1</sup>

Early in the present century Sekondi was afforded the economic advantage of being the coastal terminal for the railway to Tarkwa, and accordingly grew considerably, but the only virtue of Sekondi as a port was that its site was provided with a little shelter by a rocky promontory on its windward flank. Even there, however, ocean ships could not approach closer than one mile from the shore.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the completion of the Tarkwa railroad gave Sekondi a cheaply and quickly accessible hinterland, and speeded the process of port concentration which has been so remarkable in the Gold

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<sup>1</sup>H. P. White, "The Ports of West Africa: Some Geographical Considerations," Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie, Vol. 50 (1959), pp. 1-8.

<sup>2</sup>Shelford, op. cit., pp. 345-46.



Coast during the twentieth century. Accra similarly benefited from the construction of the eastern railroad, which provided access to the rapidly expanding centres of cocoa production.<sup>1</sup>

In 1919 Guggisberg, a few weeks after his arrival in the Gold Coast as Governor, announced the details of a 'Ten Year Development Plan' for the country. The Plan was more of an outline of Government objectives for the following decade than a blueprint for specific projects, but it was quite clear in its weighting of priorities. Heavy stress was laid upon the role of the transportation sector in economic, and ultimately in general, development. Social amenities and services would be paid for from the proceeds of growth in the economy, which required, in turn a sound infrastructure. Heading the priority list was a proposed deep-sea harbour, a project which was undertaken in 1921 and completed in 1928 at Takoradi.<sup>2</sup> The new Harbour cost £3½ millions and was the

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<sup>1</sup>White, op. cit., p. 3.

Gould, op. cit., p. 161.

K. B. Dickson, "Evolution of Seaports in Ghana: 1800-1928," Annals of the Association of American Geographers, Vol. 55 (1965), pp. 108-109.

<sup>2</sup>For details of the Plan, see Guggisberg's speech to the Legislative Council, 17 November, 1919, in Metcalfe op. cit., Chapter 34. Also, Kimble, op. cit., pp. 55-66.





key achievement of Guggisberg's Plan. A major spatial re-orientation of the economy followed its completion. Sekondi-Takoradi became the focus of the country's transportation system, and the prime port complex.<sup>1</sup> Although Accra and some of the larger surf ports - including Ada in the far eastern part of the country - continued to function, Takoradi soon emerged as the major port. By 1930 there were only five ports active; the completion and opening of Takoradi had tended to create new east-west commodity flows which by-passed the old surf ports, and threatened to undermine even those still in operation.<sup>2</sup>

#### PRIMARY AND SECONDARY PRODUCTION

##### 1. AGRICULTURE

In statements relating to the object of economic development, the Gold Coast Government invariably accorded commercial agriculture a fundamental role, as had been the case since abolition of the slave trade. This view was supported by the metropolitan authorities.

The wealth of British West Africa lies primarily in its agricultural and forest products. The Gold Coast contains important assets in the way of manganese, gold, diamonds, and bauxite . . . . But valuable as these minerals are, the economic progress of the Colonies

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<sup>1</sup>See Gould, op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>2</sup>See Gould, op. cit., pp. 56-57.  
White, op. cit., p. 6.





depends on the development of their vast agricultural and sylvicultural resources.<sup>1</sup>

The growth to eminence of the cocoa industry, soon after the beginning of the twentieth century, was therefore welcomed by the local Administration,<sup>2</sup> but its increasing dominance of the export trade became a matter for new concern.<sup>3</sup> By 1920 cocoa accounted for more than £10 millions of the total export value of £12½ millions.<sup>4</sup> The instability of world prices, particularly for raw materials, rendered an economy so dependent upon one export commodity extremely vulnerable to fluctuations in market conditions. Guggisberg warned that "in this country [the Gold Coast] we have nearly all our eggs in one basket . . . .,"<sup>5</sup> but hoped that his development programme, plus the use of special funds accumulated for employment in times of adversity, would eventually alleviate this situation.

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<sup>1</sup>Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Cmd. 2744, "Report by the Hon. W. G. Ormsby-Gore on his Visit to West Africa during the year 1926," in Metcalfe, op. cit., p. 613.

<sup>2</sup>See acting Governor Bryan's statement to the Legislative Council on the 'State of Trade in 1904', 16 October, 1955; in Metcalfe, op. cit., p. 531.

<sup>3</sup>Bourret, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>4</sup>Metcalfe, op. cit., Appendix D, and S. La Anyane, Ghana Agriculture: Its Economic Development from Early Times to the Middle of the Twentieth Century, London, 1963, Appendices 2 and 3.

<sup>5</sup>F. G. Guggisberg on the 'Ten Year Development Programme', Legislative Council, 17 November, 1919, in Metcalfe, op. cit., p. 576.



Guggisberg's warning, though not his proposed remedy, was timely. A recession in trade began in 1921 which halved the value of exports,<sup>1</sup> caused the suspension of various Government projects,<sup>2</sup> and resulted in considerable damage to the cocoa industry.<sup>3</sup> The recession endured for two years, and emphasised the dangers facing an economy with such a narrow export base as that of the Gold Coast. It also prompted greater Government efforts to encourage diversification in agricultural production for export purposes.

The instruments used by the Administration to promote its agricultural policies - which were mainly concerned with increasing and diversifying production for export - varied in nature and effectiveness. Improvements in the transportation sector served to encourage export production, particularly in areas which were remote from the coast until tapped by railways. On a more direct plane, however, the Government attempted to assist producers by providing a variety of auxiliary services. The Botanical and Agricultural Departments - the latter being re-named the Department of Agriculture in 1920 - were the most important public agencies in this field.<sup>4</sup>

Much of the work undertaken by these and other Government

<sup>1</sup>See Metcalfe, op. cit., Appendix D.

<sup>2</sup>Kimble, op. cit., p. 56.  
Bourret, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>3</sup>Anyane, op. cit., p. 98.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 19-20.





organisations involved research into the suitability of particular plants for commercial production under local conditions. Such research necessarily required the evaluation of African methods of cultivation, and the development of curative remedies for crop disease and pestilence. Application of this basic knowledge was made, whenever possible, through the use of an agricultural 'extension system', which disseminated advice to farmers throughout the country.<sup>1</sup> In all of these activities, the Departments of Botany and Agriculture built upon the efforts of earlier organisations, particularly the missions.

The first Government-operated agricultural research station was opened at Aburi in 1890,<sup>2</sup> and from its inception it played an important part in the development of cocoa farming. In 1887 the Government had distributed cocoa plants, obtained from imported San Thome seed, to local farmers in an attempt to encourage the growing of cocoa,<sup>3</sup> but the lack of an agency capable of supervising agricultural development meant that such isolated activities were not very useful. The establishment of the experimental station at Aburi was far more realistic. As early as 1891 the station was reported to be raising and distributing young cocoa seedlings.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 27-30.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 19-20.

<sup>3</sup>Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Cmd. 5845, Report of the Commission on the Marketing of West African Cocoa, 1938, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup>Kimble, op. cit., p. 34.





Aburi's location on the Akwapim Ridge, the original nucleus of the cocoa industry, placed the new research centre in an ideal proximity to the farmers most interested in growing cocoa, and undoubtedly contributed to the rapid development of the industry. Close communication was maintained between Aburi and Kew Gardens, the botanical headquarters of the Empire, which greatly facilitated the introduction of new improved varieties of cocoa into the Gold Coast. One of the hybrids - Cundeamor - received from Kew Gardens had by 1911 been shown to be a more prolific fruit-bearing variety than the one commonly grown, and was subsequently distributed widely amongst local farmers.<sup>1</sup>

By 1909 agricultural stations had been established in various parts of the country, and a number of sub-stations were being constructed. In 1918 there were five of each type of research centre operating, and more were built in the remainder of the period up to 1939.<sup>2</sup> A very large proportion of the research and applied work undertaken by the agricultural service was devoted to the improvement of the cocoa industry, which was directly and indirectly responsible for a substantial part of the public and private capital available for investment in development projects, even before 1910.

Due to its late date of origin, compared with other

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<sup>1</sup>Anyane, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 14-30 and 83-96.



major producers, the Gold Coast's cocoa industry suffered very little from disease and pestilence before the mid-1930's.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the Department of Agriculture met with little success in persuading cocoa farmers to take steps to protect their orchards from the minor ailments which had been discovered and investigated.<sup>2</sup> In the 1930's, however, the situation changed. The appearance of a disease diagnosed, in 1936, as 'swollen shoot' began to cause widespread crop losses, and could not be complacently ignored, although producers were unwilling to destroy diseased trees.<sup>3</sup> Suggested control measures were thus ineffective, and in 1945 the Cocoa Research Conference reported that

In the last ten years the position with regard to cocoa disease and pestilence has become so menacing that the whole future of the industry has been jeopardised. Its survival is dependent on devising, through research, practical methods of control.<sup>4</sup>

The Department of Agriculture also achieved mediocre results from its efforts to introduce improved cultivation methods. In addition to distributing seed and young plants,

<sup>1</sup>See C. Y. Shephard, Report on the Economics of Peasant Agriculture in the Gold Coast, Accra, 1936, passim.

<sup>2</sup>Anyane, op. cit., pp. 26-27 and 95-96.

<sup>3</sup>See W. T. Dale, "Diseases and Pests of Cocoa," Chapter 19 in Agriculture and Land Use in Ghana, ed. J. B. Wills, London, 1962.

The disease was not fully understood, but the cutting-out of stricken trees began in 1936.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted in V. D. Wickizer, Coffee, Tea and Cocoa: An Economic and Political Analysis, Stanford, 1951, p. 293.





the Department employed instructors to advise farmers on the ways and means of replacing inefficient practices.<sup>1</sup> In conjunction with the Administration, the firm of Cadbury Brothers - a major cocoa buyer - employed its own specialists for similar purposes.<sup>2</sup> Until financial stringency caused their closure during World War I, model cocoa farms were also operated by the Department of Agriculture, in an attempt to impress upon local farmers the advantages to be gained from the use of modern cultivation techniques.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, little headway was made. A visiting specialist in tropical agriculture from Trinidad, found in 1936 that the standard of cocoa cultivation in the Gold Coast was remarkably low, and remarked that the work of the Department of Agriculture left much to be desired.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the most significant point in his report concerned the productive future of the industry. Due to poor farming techniques, cocoa yields had begun to drop in the older areas, and were not being compensated by expansion elsewhere. Unless new plantings were made, on a large-scale, it was probable that production would soon deteriorate, rapidly.<sup>5</sup> In 1938 the

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<sup>1</sup>Anyane, op. cit., pp. 27-30.

<sup>2</sup>Iolo A. Williams, The Firm of Cadbury, 1831-1931, London, 1931, pp. 146-52.

<sup>3</sup>Anyane, op. cit., pp. 27-30.

<sup>4</sup>Shephard, op. cit., p. 121.

<sup>5</sup>Loc. cit.





'Nowell Commission' came to similar conclusions and, with reference to farming practices, maintained:

Beyond the periodic cutting of the undergrowth necessary for access, and apart from the collection of the crop, the trees are left to nature. The measures which are standard on a well-conducted plantation - drainage, pruning, manuring, and pest control are unknown.<sup>1</sup>

One result, which had long been a problem, of the prevailing low standard of cultivation was the uneven quality of Gold Coast cocoa. As early as 1905, the Governor drew attention to the large disparity, in quality and price, between Gold Coast and San Thome produce. Whereas the latter could be sold for 52 shillings per cwt., in 1905, local produce brought only 30 to 46 shillings.<sup>2</sup> In 1909 William Cadbury found that " . . . not more than one load out of five

of Gold Coast cocoa is of such quality that it is possible to purchase . . . . "<sup>3</sup> Quite apart from the relatively poor quality of local cocoa, Gold Coast farmers and middlemen indulged in the rather unfortunate practice of mixing good beans with bad, in an attempt to sell both, a custom which prevented the better produce from being sold at a fair price.<sup>4</sup>

During the 1920's the United States Government introduced

<sup>1</sup>Cmd. 5845, op. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Governor's statement to the Legislative Council on the 'State of Trade in 1904', 16 October, 1905, in Metcalfe, op. cit., pp. 531-32.

<sup>3</sup>Williams, op. cit., p. 149.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.



minimum quality standards for imported cocoa, and in 1925 and 1926 several consignments of Gold Coast produce were rejected, on the grounds that the shipments contained too high a proportion of diseased beans.<sup>1</sup> The new American regulations allowed the Gold Coast Government to persuade exporting firms of the need for quality controls. From 1927 the Department of Agriculture examined cocoa shipments for defects, although the inspection system was established on a voluntary basis and 'low purity' consignments could not be withheld from exporters.<sup>2</sup>

The inspection scheme was found to be of little practical value; merchants were either antipathetic or indifferent towards it, and tended to disregard the rating certificates awarded by the Department of Agriculture. Moreover, the grading system did not generally prompt merchants to pay differential prices for the various standards of cocoa, and, hence producers were given little incentive to improve the quality of their crops.<sup>3</sup>

It was mainly to raise the standard of cocoa produced that the Department of Agriculture, in conjunction with Cadbury's advisors, initiated a cooperative movement during the 1920's.<sup>4</sup> From 1925 efforts were made, particularly in

<sup>1</sup>Shephard, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

Anyane, op. cit., Chapter 17.





Ashanti, to encourage the voluntary formation of cooperative societies, essentially for the purpose of preparing and marketing cocoa. It was hoped that, with the assistance of the Department's staff, the cooperatives would be able to produce a higher and more uniform quality of cocoa, and gain a higher price for their produce. From thirty one in 1931, the number of such organisations had risen to 414 in 1934.<sup>1</sup> However, together, they still accounted for only 2.6 per cent of the total cocoa exported.<sup>2</sup> In 1938 the Nowell Commission also found that cooperative produce only received a premium of sixpence per load over the normal price.<sup>3</sup> Even if it compensated the cooperative farmers for their extra efforts, such a small price difference was unlikely to encourage others to follow suit.

The example of the cocoa industry provides a fairly typical illustration of the active role of the Government throughout the agricultural sector of the Gold Coast economy. Usually, the Government was able to directly influence agricultural production only slightly. The oil palm industry lends further support to this view.<sup>4</sup> A steady decline

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<sup>1</sup>Shephard, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>Cmd. 5845, op. cit., pp. 40-41.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>The oil palm industry produces two main products - palm oil and palm-kernel oil. Palm oil is extracted from the pericarp, or fruit, of the tree and involves a relatively simple process which does not require machinery. It is palm oil which Africans use for domestic purposes. Palm-kernel oil is produced from the kernel of the fruit, and does require industrial crushing plants. Hence, most of the kernel-crushing is undertaken in the industrial countries.





in palm oil exports after 1900 occasioned considerable alarm on the part of both export merchants and the Government. Palm oil had been one of the most substantial items in the nineteenth century export trade, but from a 1900 level of £238,812 the value of palm oil exports fell to a little over £88,000 in 1905. Despite upward fluctuations between then and 1912, the value further declined to £40,000 in 1919, and £5000 in 1939.<sup>1</sup> The introduction of higher-yielding varieties of oil palm, in 1907, made little difference to the prevailing trend.<sup>2</sup>

An obvious reason for at least part of the decline in palm oil production was that cocoa farming offered a more profitable alternative. By 1911 some former palm oil producers were even felling their trees, in order to clear land for cocoa cultivation.<sup>3</sup> Again, many of the people who participated in the westward migration of cocoa farmers, in the Colony, were from traditional palm oil centres in the South-east. Groups such as the Krobo used their proceeds from the trade in palm oil products to finance land purchases, west of the Densu, for cocoa farming.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Statistics in Anyane, op. cit., Appendices 2 and 3.

<sup>2</sup>Following experimental work at Aburi, several foreign varieties were introduced which produced higher oil-yields than indigenous varieties. See ibid., pp. 24-25.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>4</sup>Polly, Hill, The Migrant Cocoa-Farmers of Southern Ghana: A Study in Rural Capitalism, Cambridge, 1963, Chapter 6.





Cocoa farming proved to be such an attractive alternative to the oil palm industry, with the result that there was a massive transfer of labour from the one activity to the other, that even in 1906 the Department of Agriculture believed that ". . . it is a matter of time, unless machinery, is used, before the oil palm industry dies out."<sup>1</sup> In 1912 the Colonial Office attempted salvage operations by instructing the Gold Coast Government to introduce a Palm Oil Ordinance into the Colony's Legislative Council. The purpose of the Bill was to enable the granting of concessions to expatriate industrialists, in order to interest them in establishing industrial plants for the extraction of palm oil.

. . . the Bill is framed with a view to revive an old established Gold Coast industry by encouraging capitalists to erect modern machinery for the expression of oil from the pericarp of palm fruits.<sup>2</sup>

Industrialists were to be attracted by the offer of a monopoly over the production, by machine, of palm oil in an area of 300 square miles. Since a single concession could include one-tenth of the palm oil-producing region, opposition to the Bill was heated. Nevertheless, the measure was pressed through the Legislative Council and became legal in 1913. The controversy over the dangers of establishing powerful monopoly interests in the industry lost much of its immediate relevance when Lever Bros., the firm which had been

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<sup>1</sup>Annual Report of Department of Agriculture, 1906; quoted in Anyane, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>Debate on the Second Reading of the Palm Oil Bill, Legislative Council, 28 January, 1913; in Metcalfe, op. cit., p. 540.



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interested in obtaining concessions, decided to cancel its plans for building a crushing plant, due to the failure of similar projects in Nigeria and Sierra Leone.<sup>1</sup>

Several years later a new controversy arose over the palm kernel section of the industry. Prior to 1914 Germany, with a very large crushing industry, was the major world market for palm kernels, and Hamburg the main focus of international trade in that commodity. German markets were important not only for the actual oil, but also for the residual crushed kernels, which were used in large quantities as livestock feed.<sup>2</sup> The interruption of trade with Germany, following the outbreak of war, prompted British merchants to consider the possibility of establishing a kernel-crushing industry in the United Kingdom, and re-orientating the palm kernel trade to the home market. Their suggestions led to the Government appointing a committee of inquiry to investigate the West African trade in palm kernels and other oil-bearing products. The subsequent report advised that a crushing industry could be developed within Britain, and recommended that after the War a preferential tariff should be imposed upon colonial exports of palm kernels in order to secure the necessary re-direction of trade.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Kimble, op. cit., pp. 45-47.

<sup>2</sup>Hancock, op. cit., pt. 1, p. 114.

<sup>3</sup>Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Cmd. 8247, "Report of the Committee on Edible and Oil Producing Nuts and Seeds in West Africa," 1916.





These proposals were accepted by the British Government, and legislation followed in 1919. However, in addition to a preferential tariff, a quota system for palm kernel exports from colonial territories was also instituted. Eight-ninths of the kernels exported from British West Africa, plus similar proportions of other oil-yielding commodities, were to be reserved for the British market. Neither of these measures was successful; the quota system was withdrawn soon after its introduction, and the tariff survived only until 1921.<sup>1</sup>

One of the more notable achievements of this short-lived policy was to cause an even further deterioration in the West African oil palm industry. Under peace-time conditions the volume of kernels produced for export was too great to be absorbed by British markets, and the quota system was quite unnecessary. On the other hand, the shortage of kernels, and their higher price through the imposition of the export tariff, had persuaded European consumers to look elsewhere for their supplies. Consequently, Indonesia and other non-British territories had been able to develop their own oil palm industries. British West Africa was therefore faced with a contracted market, and production accordingly declined.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Kimble, op. cit., pp. 51-55.

Hancock, op. cit., p5. 1, pp. 111-21.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.



Cotton was another crop which occupied the attention of the Gold Coast Government, although the problem in that case concerned the establishment of an export industry, not the protection of one already in existence. The influential British Cotton Growing Association, which was interested in encouraging the development of cotton production within the Empire, was responsible for initiating several projects within the Gold Coast, and worked in loose association with the Department of Agriculture. New varieties of seed were imported from the United States, and a number of ginneries were established throughout the country. Little progress was made, however, mainly due to the high incidence of cotton diseases, and production remained on an experimental basis.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, attempts to foster other commercial agricultural projects met with only slight success. Some progress was made, during and after World War I, in encouraging the growth of sisal, coffee, bananas, citrus fruits and other crops, but most of these schemes were mortally damaged by the effects of the Depression in the early 1930's.<sup>2</sup> It seemed, before 1930, that such projects were more soundly conceived when the products enjoyed domestic popularity. Hence, a scheme to expand rice production in the Appolonia district of the South-west proved to be a worthwhile

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<sup>1</sup>See: Anyane, op. cit., pp. 50-54 and 129-30.

J. Howard Reed, "Geographical Aspects of Empire Cotton Growing," Geographical Journal, Vol. 37 (1911), pp. 129-49.

<sup>2</sup>See Anyane, op. cit., passim.





enterprise. However, an export-oriented copra industry also managed to survive and expand, following the establishment of Government coconut nurseries in 1909.<sup>1</sup> Two main points emerge from the preceding consideration of the agricultural sector of the economy. Notwithstanding the severe effects of the Depression and the failure of many experimental projects, agricultural production for export markets expanded considerably during the period under review. On the other hand, diversification did not accompany growth; agricultural exports were more varied in 1900 than they were in 1939. Most of the expansion of production could be attributed to the cocoa industry, which contributed 61.6 per cent of the Gold Coast's total exports, by value, in 1937.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. MINING

With the completion of the railroad to Tarkwa, in May of 1901, the mining companies in that area were able to begin importing the heavy machinery and other equipment which had previously been unobtainable. Production was consequently suspended until the new plant was installed.<sup>3</sup> In 1902, gold

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<sup>1</sup>K. B. Dickson, "Development of the Copra Industry in Ghana," Journal of Tropical Geography, Vol. 19 (1964), pp. 27-34.

<sup>2</sup>The figure for 1937 is given because the producers strike of 1938 distorted the figures for 1938 and 1939. For statistics, see: Anyane, op. cit., Appendix 3. Metcalfe, op. cit., Appendix D.

<sup>3</sup>Extract from the Annual Report of the Gold Coast for 1902 in Metcalfe, op. cit., p. 530.





exports were worth £97,000, practically the whole output being produced by the Ashanti Goldfields Corporation - and its subsidiary, the Ashanti Sansu Mine - from its workings at Obuasi.<sup>1</sup> A large increase in the value of gold produced and exported was obtained in the following year, 1903, when the total was £255,000.<sup>2</sup> Much of the rise could be attributed to the resumption of productive operations, and the use of modern equipment, by the Tarkwa mines. Although the railroad had reached Obuasi by December of 1902, it was unlikely that the Ashanti Goldfields Corporation had been given sufficient time to benefit from the installation and use of new machinery.

The expansion of gold production continued unabated until 1914, receiving additional stimulus from the opening of the branch railway to Prestea in 1911, which allowed modern mining equipment to be employed there, too.<sup>3</sup> By 1905 gold was easily the most important export commodity, accounting in that year for 36.27 per cent - £597,000 - of the total value of Gold Coast exports. The export value of gold had risen to almost £1 $\frac{3}{4}$  millions in 1914, and to a little less than £4 millions in 1937. However, cocoa had reduced the proportional significance of gold exports to 24 per cent of

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<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit. These two concerns were responsible for the whole of production, except a shipment worth £2,000 from the Bibiani Goldfields and £35 worth of African-produced gold.

<sup>2</sup>Kimble, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>3</sup>Gould, op. cit., p. 32.



the total by 1937.<sup>1</sup>

The statistics indicate an overall growth of production during the period from 1901 to the outbreak of World War II, but growth was not so dramatic as might have been expected at the beginning of the century. Although 476 companies registered for gold mining operations in West Africa during the period 1880-1904, in 1904 there were only four concerns in the Gold Coast with annual outputs greater than £10,000 in value.<sup>2</sup> The 'boom' confidently expected to follow the granting of over 4,000 mining concessions, in Ashanti and the Colony, during 1900 and 1901 never materialised. Most of the concessions were not exploited and of those that were, few proved to be worthwhile. In Ashanti, for example, only the concession gained by Cade for the Ashanti Goldfields Corporation yielded significant returns. Until 1926 the Corporation was in most years the only company actively working in Ashanti.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, with the exception of the years from 1908 to 1910, the growth of gold production was steady and continuous until the record level of 462,000 ozs. was reached in 1915. Thereafter production declined for several years, and was down to 221,000 ozs. in 1921.<sup>4</sup> The immediate cause

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<sup>1</sup>Data from Metcalfe, op. cit., Appendix D; E. A. Boateng, A Geography of Ghana, Cambridge, 1959, p. 88; Bourret, op. cit., p. 127.

<sup>2</sup>J. D. Fage, Ghana: A Historical Interpretation, Madison, Wisconsin, 1959, p. 106.

<sup>3</sup>William Tordoff, Ashanti Under the Prempehs, 1888-1935, London, 1965, p. 188.

<sup>4</sup>A. McPhee, The Economic Revolution in British West Africa, London, 1926, p. 54.





of this substantial reverse was the difficulty of functioning normally under wartime conditions. Large quantities of gold accumulated within the country due to the shortage of adequate shipping facilities - thereby impounding a substantial part of the mining industry's capital - and many necessary imported materials were in short supply.<sup>1</sup>

From a longer-term viewpoint, a shortage of labour in the mining industry also proved to be an important restriction. Cocoa farming and traditional modes of transporting cocoa were both attractive alternatives to those Africans employed in mining. They offered higher wages and pleasanter working conditions, and in the years after 1915 lured increasingly larger proportions of the labour force previously attracted to the gold mines.<sup>2</sup> From 1907 to 1924 the Government assisted the mining companies in their quest for labourers by recruiting men from the Northern Territories, but many of the recruits strayed into employment on Ashanti cocoa farms, as they made their way south.

The mining industry's labour shortage became especially severe during the 1920's, when Government construction projects - such as Takoradi Harbour - increased the range of employment alternatives. Whereas in 1917 some 15,000 Africans

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<sup>1</sup>See G. K. Allen, "Gold Mining in Ghana," Transactions of the Institution of Mining and Metallurgy, Vol. 66 (1956-57), p. 509.

Also, Sir Hugh Clifford's speech in the Legislative Assembly, 25 October, 1917, in Metcalfe, op. cit., p. 565.

<sup>2</sup>McPhee, op. cit., p. 54.





were working in the gold mines, the number had fallen to 10,000 in the early 1920's, without any decrease in the mines' demand for labour.<sup>1</sup> The problem was further accentuated in 1924 when the Government ceased to act as a recruiting agent for the industry in the Northern Territories.<sup>2</sup> The individual companies found recruiting in the North too expensive to undertake themselves, so future labour migrations from that area were quite unorganised.

The slump in gold production continued through the 1920's, although there was evidence of a slight recovery towards the end of the decade. Output rose from 157,655 ozs. in 1928 to 250,000 ozs. in 1931;<sup>3</sup> the entire production was due to only four companies.<sup>4</sup> Somewhat ironically, the Depression, which depressed the production and trade of other industries, proved to be the salvation of gold mining in many countries of the world. The Depression forced the final departure

<sup>1</sup>Kimble, op. cit., pp. 40-42.

E. A. Boateng, "The Tarkwa Gold Mining Industry - A Retrospect," Bulletin of the Gold Coast Geographical Association, Vol. 2 (1957), pp. 6-7.

<sup>2</sup>The system was ended because evidence had come to light which revealed an extremely high death-rate amongst miners, a circumstance which the Government believed it should not ignore. In 1925 medical and health legislation were enacted, obliging the mining companies to introduce new safety measures.

See Kimble, op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>3</sup>The Times, Gold: A Reprint of the Special Number of the Times, Tuesday, June 20, 1933, London, 1933, p. 90.

<sup>4</sup>G. K. Allen, "Gold Mining in Ghana," Transactions of the Institution of Mining and Metallurgy, Vol. 66 (1956-'57), p. 509.





of most national economies from a gold-standard base, and hence released gold from its fixed-price bondage. Together with the depreciation of all major currencies, which enhanced the value of gold, this had the effect of stimulating higher world prices for that commodity.<sup>1</sup> The re-stabilisation of the price of gold, in terms of national currencies, was at a higher level.

For the mining industry, these changes meant that production costs were little different, but the world price for gold was considerably higher. Hence, the industry received a powerful stimulus.<sup>2</sup> In the Gold Coast new and previously marginal mines could be operated, even though costs were higher in such cases. It was under these circumstances that the Konongo gold field was opened in 1933.<sup>3</sup> Expansion of production continued through the 1930's and in 1941 the fifteen companies in operation had a total output of 885,712 ozs. of gold, a level which was never again equalled.<sup>4</sup> The Obuasi field, alone, was responsible for approximately one-half of

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<sup>1</sup>See: Paul Einzig, The Future of Gold, London, 1934, passim.

S. Korteweg and F. A. G. Keesing, A Textbook of Money, London, 1959, passim.

<sup>2</sup>Allen, op. cit., p. 509.

<sup>3</sup>Boateng, "The Tarkwa Gold Mining Industry - A Retrospect," op. cit., passim, and A Geography of Ghana, op. cit., pp. 93-94.

<sup>4</sup>Allen, op. cit., p. 509.

Boateng, A Geography of Ghana, op. cit., p. 94.





the total production.<sup>1</sup>

The Depression also contributed to the recovery of gold mining in the Gold Coast by solving the labour shortage problem. Large numbers of employees were released from the cocoa industry, and other activities in the modern sector of the economy, by the decline in trade. Their need to find work elsewhere allowed the mining industry - of which gold mining was the dominant component - to increase its labour force from 6,000 in 1933 to 18,000 in 1939,<sup>2</sup> a factor which eased considerably the labour restraints on expanding production.

Development in other areas of the mining sector lagged well behind gold mining, although the demand for road materials gave early rise to quarrying in many parts of the country. The establishment of the Gold Coast Geological Survey, in 1913, preceded the undertaking of a series of extensive mineralogical surveys which revealed the presence of a number of useful minerals. By 1916 the survey had located deposits of manganese, iron ore, tin, molybdenum, mediocre oil-shales, bitumen and bauxite, in addition to having mapped the main goldfields.<sup>3</sup> Exploitation of the various mineral deposits was generally delayed by the lack of adequate transportation facilities, but the importance of manganese to the Allied

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<sup>1</sup>Boateng, A Geography of Ghana, op. cit., p. 94.

<sup>2</sup>Boateng, "The Tarkwa Gold Mining Industry - A Retrospect," op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>See A. E. Kitson [then the Director of the Gold Coast Geological Survey], "The Gold Coast: Some Considerations of its Structure, People, and Natural History," Geographical Journal, Vol. 48 (1916), pp. 371-91.





war effort resulted in its development, from 1916, at Nsuta, near Tarkwa. A branch line was constructed in 1917, linking Nsuta with the Sekondi-Kumasi railway. The railroad carried over 33,000 tons of manganese in the year of its construction.<sup>1</sup> After the War, production of manganese increased fairly steadily and in 1937 exports of that mineral were valued at £1,025,091.<sup>2</sup>

The discovery of diamonds near Kibi, in 1919, led to a new development in the mining sector. Several other diamond fields, in the Eastern and Western Regions of the Colony, were found in subsequent years. The better fields, particularly those in the Oda and Akwatia areas, were worked by European companies, while the others were left to the more primitive methods employed by African diggers.<sup>3</sup> Progress was, again, unspectacular, but by 1937 exports of diamond were worth £600,000, and the Gold Coast was the world's third largest diamond producer.<sup>4</sup>

There were no other significant developments in the mining sector before World War II, and the mineral wealth of the country may be regarded as a resource area which had not received the attention it deserved. Nevertheless, the

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<sup>1</sup>Gould, op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>Bourret, op. cit., p. 127.

<sup>3</sup>See Boateng, A Geography of Ghana, op. cit., Chapter 8.

<sup>4</sup>Bourret, op. cit., p. 127.



overall impression is that the mining industries developed considerably in that period, with gold production retaining its traditional dominance. The construction of railroads to the major gold mining areas permitted a modernisation of the industry, through the installation of heavy, new equipment, which occurred in time to prevent its extinction. Similarly, the devaluation, in terms of gold, of the world's major currencies during the Depression also gave the industry greater scope for development, by raising the price of gold and thereby saving marginal mines from closure.

### 3. FORESTRY

At a relatively early date, the Gold Coast Government decided that its intervention would be necessary if a rational utilisation of the country's forest resources were to be achieved. However, the need for forestry conservation could not, it seemed, be separated from other aspects of the increasing pace of economic life. During the 1890's, " . . . the wanton dissipation of the forests and their natural products"<sup>1</sup> appeared to be a problem closely related to " . . . the reckless alienation of tribal lands . . . ."<sup>2</sup> which was accompanying the growing European interest in obtaining mining concessions. Both of these problems were viewed as unfortunate consequences of the encroachment of the modern

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<sup>1</sup>Metcalfe, op. cit., p. 471.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.





sector of the economy upon traditional society.

It rapidly emerged that the solution in both cases, seemed to lie in the Government obtaining regulatory powers over land use, in order to control forest clearance, and over the transfer of land ownership, to prevent the 'excessive' sale of tribal land.<sup>1</sup> Governor Griffith suggested that the whole country be converted into Crown land, but his proposal was rejected by the Colonial Office on the grounds of inexpediency and political danger.<sup>2</sup> Two years later, in 1891, the Chief Justice of the Colony considered the feasibility of transferring wasteland to the Crown. He advised that the cost of compensation, and political disaffection, would be so high that it would be worthwhile only to deal thus with mineral areas and completely un-used forest lands.<sup>3</sup> Eventually, in 1894, the decision was made to vest ownership rights to 'waste-land' - defined as land neither farmed nor populated - with the Crown. In addition, the Crown Lands Bill of 1894 was intended to appropriate for the Crown, alone, the authority to grant mineral and timber concessions, although existing arrangements were to be respected.<sup>4</sup>

United opposition to the Bill, on the part of local

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<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Kimble, op. cit., pp. 331-34.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 334-39.





Africans, who believed it to be designed to undermine their traditional rights to land ownership, led to its being withdrawn, and a new measure drafted.<sup>1</sup> A second Ordinance was introduced in 1897. It was announced, however, that no further attempt would be made to annex wasteland and consign it to Crown ownership. Instead, a rather vague 'administration' over such land would be assumed by the Government.<sup>2</sup> Practically, the difference was very slight; similar controls to those envisaged in the previous Bill would be established and exercised by the Government.

African opposition had by that time crystallized into a stubborn hostility towards any proposed legislation concerning land rights, and was not satisfied by the modification of the Bill's wording. Out of this intransigence arose the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society [A.R.P.S.], in 1897, " . . . [which] was perhaps the first organised protest on anything approaching a national scale in the Gold Coast . . . ."<sup>3</sup> The A. R. P. S. spearheaded the campaign against the 1897 Bill, which was withdrawn in the following year. It remains uncertain, however, whether it was pressure from the A. R. P. S. or from commercial lobbies in England which finally persuaded the Colonial Office to order the Bill's withdrawal.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 334-39.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 339.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 340.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 330.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 340-55.

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One effect of the controversy was to delay for many years the introduction of a forest conservation programme. In 1899 plans to establish regulation of the timber industry and to implant the seeds of a conservation policy were set aside, to avoid the further stirring of political antipathy towards the Government.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the forest-exploitation problem was not lost sight of in the following years. Attention was drawn in 1907 to the need for controlling mahogany extraction, if the young trees were to be allowed to mature,<sup>2</sup> and the Timber Protection Ordinance of 1908 aimed specifically at prohibiting the felling of under-sized trees. However, that measure was considered to be an interim ruling which did not obviate the need for more comprehensive legislation.<sup>3</sup>

A brief survey conducted by a visiting forestry officer from southern Nigeria indicated the problem to be faced. His report, published in 1908,<sup>4</sup> stressed the necessity of an afforestation programme, in addition to conservation practices. It also contained a recommendation that a Forestry Department be established to plan the development of reserves on watersheds and other critical sites, such as exposed hill

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 362.

<sup>2</sup>Sir John Roger [Governor], Statement in Legislative Council, 30 September, 1907, in Metcalfe, op. cit., pp. 535-36.

<sup>3</sup>McPhee, op. cit., p. 148.

<sup>4</sup>Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Cd 4993, "Gold Coast: Report on Forests," 1910. [Author: H. N. Thompson.]





summits. The required scope of Government action was thus made reasonably clear, and a first positive step in the outlined direction was taken in 1909 with the formation of the Forestry Department.

Unfortunately, the Government blundered into African opposition once more when it attempted to press the Forestry Bill of 1910 through the Legislative Council without adequate explanation. The Bill's object was to permit the establishment of forest reserves on 'waste-land', a term which evoked memories of the earlier land bill struggles. The Bill failed to comply with certain procedural requirements and was consequently withdrawn at its first reading.<sup>1</sup> A revised version was introduced into the Legislative Council in 1911 and successfully enacted by the end of the year, despite strong opposition from a resurgent A. R. P. S., which tended to regard legislation relating to land as an almost personal challenge.<sup>2</sup>

Implementation of the Forestry Ordinance, however, was withheld, pending the report of a Special Commissioner appointed by the Colonial Secretary to inquire into land tenure conditions and the problem of tribal land alienation.<sup>3</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup>Kimble, op. cit., pp. 363-66.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Cd. 6278, "Report on the Legislation Governing the Alienation of Native Lands in the Gold Coast Colony and Ashanti; with Some Observations on the Forest Ordinance," 1912. [Author: H. Conway Belfield.]





Commissioner's report, published in July of 1912, did not settle any of the controversial issues surrounding the Forestry Ordinance, although it contained a warning of the social dangers likely to result from excessive appropriations of land for reserves. To explore the matter further, the West African Lands Committee was appointed, also in 1912, and there the hopes pertaining to a forest conservation policy effectively ended, at least for many years. The Committee deliberated until 1916, when a draft report was issued which was too sweeping in its recommendations for even the Gold Coast Administration to accept.<sup>1</sup>

The idea of creating forest reserves in critical locations was officially shelved until Guggisberg revived it in 1923.<sup>2</sup> He hoped that the local people would voluntarily cooperate with the Government, to effect what compulsion had been unsuccessful in achieving. By 1926, however, only 307 square **miles** of forest reserves had been established, in contrast to the 6,000 square miles officially deemed necessary. In the following year a fresh Ordinance was consequently enacted which gave the Government the power to order the creation of reserves.<sup>3</sup> Most of the work undertaken before 1939 was limited to the closed forest zone, where the pressure

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<sup>1</sup>See McPhee, op. cit., pp. 150-52.  
Kimble, op. cit., pp. 367-71

<sup>2</sup>McPhee, op. cit., p. 152.

<sup>3</sup>Hailey, op. cit., p. 949.



of cocoa farming had made reservation a critical necessity.<sup>1</sup> Some 1,712 square miles of forest had been set aside for protection by 1939.<sup>2</sup>

During the period in which the political controversy over forest conservation, and land tenure, was raging in Accra, and Cape Coast, the actual timber industry enjoyed mixed fortunes. The modern export trade in timber originated in 1888, although there is record of an earlier trade, in special woods for ship keels, during the Elizabethan era.<sup>3</sup> Before the advent of railroads formidable transportation problems hampered the industry's growth,<sup>4</sup> but production expanded steadily in the early years of the twentieth century. In 1913 over 3,000,000 cubic feet of timber, valued at £366,000 were shipped overseas.<sup>5</sup>

World War I caused a drastic reduction in exports, through shipping shortages, and only 620,000 cubic feet of timber were despatched to foreign markets in 1917. During the 1920's the industry slowly recovered without, however, regaining the production level set in 1913. The Depression of the early 1930's offset the expansionary trend, exports

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<sup>1</sup>A. Foggie, "The Role of Forestry in the Agricultural Economy," Agriculture and Land Use in Ghana, op. cit., p. 230.

<sup>2</sup>Hailey, op. cit., p. 949.

<sup>3</sup>A. Foggie and B. Piasecki, "Timber Fuel and Minor Forest Produce," Chapter 17 in Agriculture and Land Use in Ghana, op. cit., p. 236.

<sup>4</sup>Boateng, A Geography of Ghana, op. cit., p. 82.

<sup>5</sup>W. E. M. Logan, "Timber Exploitation in the Gold Coast," Empire Forestry Review, Vol. 26 (1947), pp. 30-53.





plunging down to 200,000 cubic feet in 1933. Predictably, the later 1930's were more favourable and the export trade steadily recovered once more.<sup>1</sup> Although not a major component of the economy, the timber industry thus earned an income which contributed usefully to the Gold Coast's stock of foreign currencies. Moreover, provided forest conservation could prevent the wasteful depletion of a valuable resource, timber production promised to be a reliable source of foreign earnings.

As a fuel, wood also held an important place in the domestic economy, although timber was not used on a significant scale in traditional construction.<sup>2</sup> A 1958 estimate suggested that the per capita consumption of wood for fuel purposes was about 54 cubic feet per year.<sup>3</sup> If this figure is applied to the population estimates for 1901 and 1939, then total firewood consumption in those years must have been approximately 97,250,000 and 195,250,000 cubic feet respectively.<sup>4</sup> These projections are not very meaningful in themselves, but they do indicate the magnitude of fuel-wood consumption, and they also afford an impression of the enormous quantities of wood which were destroyed each year

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<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Boateng, A Geography of Ghana, op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>3</sup>Foggie, op. cit., p. 233.

<sup>4</sup>The population in 1901 has been assumed to have been 1,800,000 [after R. Szereszewski, Structural Changes in the Economy of Ghana, 1891-1911, London, 1965, Appendix 13 , and that in 1939 to have been 3,615,484. after Boateng, A Geography of Ghana, op. cit., p. 110.]





by farmers clearing land for cultivation. Whether as domestic fuel or as simple waste, much good timber was demolished in the process, a fact which caused the Government to view the conservation problem with a sense of urgency.

#### 4. MANUFACTURING

The significance of manufacturing in the economies of under-developed countries is, almost without exception, an unknown quantity, and is often under-estimated. Data relating to modern manufacturing concerns are usually available but this is rarely the case with traditional activities, which are clearly important though quantitatively obscure. The scarcity of statistical information is, of course, to be expected. A different problem of evaluation is provided by the generally low level of labour specialisation.<sup>1</sup> Although craftsmen such as metal-smiths may be obvious specialists, many goods - including a wide range of tools and foodstuffs - are produced by people who are not primarily 'manufacturers', but perhaps farmers. Some of these goods are directly consumed by the producers, while others enter only the local exchange economy. As pointed out elsewhere, this is a situation which tends to make nonsense out of attempts to classify

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<sup>1</sup>For a statement of this problem, as it concerns modern Ghana, see: Tony Killick, "Labour: A General Survey," Chapter 6 in The Economy of Ghana, Vol. 1 of A Study of Contemporary Ghana, ed. Walter Birmingham, I. Neustadt and E. N. Omaboe, London, 1966, pp. 123-31.





producers into primary, secondary and tertiary categories.<sup>1</sup> It does not, however, prevent discussion of categories of production, as opposed to producers, so long as the limitations of classification are borne in mind.

In terms of contribution to the Gross Domestic Product and employment of factors of production, the significance of traditional manufacturing and processing activities is difficult to assess. Nevertheless, in both respects, their contribution is unquestionably substantial in most under-developed economies. Szereszewski has compiled national accounts for the Gold Coast, covering the years 1891, 1901 and 1911, which provide an indication of the magnitude of the traditional economy as a whole.<sup>2</sup> In 1901 the estimated expenditure on the Gross Domestic Product was £10,185,000, 'traditional consumption' accounting for £7,500,000 (73.6 per cent) of that sum.<sup>3</sup> Expenditure on food was the major component of traditional consumption, being responsible for approximately five-sixths of the total.<sup>4</sup> Non-food expenditure, in the

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<sup>1</sup>This subject has been a topic for lively academic debate. See: P. T. Bauer and B. S. Yamey, "Economic Progress and Occupational Distribution," Economic Journal, Vol. 61 (1951), pp. 741-55, and "Further Notes on Economic Progress and Occupational Distribution," Economic Journal, Vol. 64 (1954), pp. 98-106; also A. G. B. Fisher, "A Note on Tertiary Production," Economic Journal, Vol. 62 (1952), pp. 820-34.

<sup>2</sup>Szereszewski, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Appendix C.

<sup>4</sup>See Loc. cit. The proportions of food and non-food expenditures have been derived by de-constructing the 'daily basket' which Szereszewski used to build his total figure for traditional consumption. The basket consisted of a daily, per capita expenditure estimate, five-sixths of which was allocated to food purchases. Daily expenditure per head was taken to be 3d. in Ashanti and the Colony, and 2d. in the Northern Territories.





traditional sector, therefore amounted to £1,247,700, or  $12\frac{1}{4}$  per cent of the total Gross Domestic Product. Although this figure included service payments, for functions such as those concerned with religion and traditional government activities,<sup>1</sup> most of the expenditure was on items produced by secondary industries. Amongst these would be included tools, foodstuffs, clothing and housing.

By 1911 the proportion of the Gross Domestic Product due to traditional consumption had declined to 57 per cent,<sup>2</sup> and continued to decline further, as the modern economy expanded. With the growth of the import trade in manufactured goods, as export earning increased, it may well have been that traditional secondary industries declined in absolute as well as relative terms. Certainly the increasing consumption of imported textiles and other commodities must have undermined local craft industries in the more prosperous parts of the country. A spectacular example of the effect of the growth in imported manufactures on the traditional economy was provided by the Buem iron-working industry.<sup>3</sup> By the end of World War I it had been completely destroyed by competition from the factories of Europe,<sup>4</sup> despite the fact that before

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>3</sup>See Michael Darkoh, "The Economic Life of Buem: 1884-1914," Bulletin of the Ghana Geographical Association, Vol. 9 (1964), pp. 40-54.

<sup>4</sup>Idem., "Recent Trends in the Economic Geography of Buem," Bulletin of the Ghana Geographers Association, Vol. 9 (1964), p. 63.





1894 local agriculture had been " . . . entirely dependent on traditional blacksmithing for the supplies of working implements such as hoes, axes, chisels, mattocks and knives."<sup>1</sup> Prior to 1939 there were few modern manufacturing establishments in the Gold Coast, and they were of negligible significance to the economy. Most of those capital and consumer goods produced by advanced industrial techniques were imported. However, the first modern enterprises were established about 1904 and included a sawmill in the Sekondi district, a mineral water plant in Cape Coast, and a repair shop at Ada for steam launches.<sup>2</sup> In addition there were ore-crushing plants associated with the gold mines and maintenance facilities for the railways, which could also be termed secondary industries, although bordering on the tertiary category.

During the following three decades the economy underwent considerable expansion, but there was no significant growth of modern manufacturing industries. Perhaps the most notable innovations, within this field, were connected with the oil palm industry. Although the firm of Lever Brothers had failed to take advantage of the controversial Palm Oil Ordinance of 1912, two other European companies had begun to produce palm oil, using machinery, by 1914. Their plants were located in the Western Region of the Colony.<sup>3</sup> New

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<sup>1</sup>Idem., "The Economic Life of Buem: 1884-1916," op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>2</sup>Szereszewski, op. cit., p. 63.

<sup>3</sup>Anyane, op. cit., p. 33.





schemes to promote factory production of palm oil was considered by the Department of Agriculture, and the prospects for such an industry by a number of expatriate firms, during the early 1920's, but there was no further development until the United Africa Company established a plant in the Krobo district in 1931.<sup>1</sup> The project was underwritten, to an extent, by the Government, which had agreed to pay the Company a subsidy in the event of there being insufficient fruit supplied for the mills to operate at five-sixths of their capacity. Within a few months it was evident that local production of oil palm fruit was quite inadequate, and the scheme was abandoned.<sup>2</sup>

Smaller projects were also sponsored by the Government, most of them concerning the processing of vegetable produce, but none was more than a marginal success.<sup>3</sup> Experiments with sugar, cotton and coffee processing plants were undertaken, but they all lacked support from African farmers. The major problem was that the local people seemed basically disinterested in growing crops other than cocoa, but perhaps their attitude stemmed from an indigenous appreciation of the economics of commercial farming; many of the Department of Agriculture's schemes were unsound from the start, whereas cocoa cultivation was in normal years highly profitable. In poor years, when

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 112-24.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 129-41.





trade underwent recession, cocoa farming was still more lucrative than other activities.

### TRADE

Both the United Kingdom Government and the local Administration believed that they should seek to encourage growth in the Gold Coast's trade sector, but their interest was almost entirely limited to external trade. Indeed, Lugard, who spent many years as a colonial administrator in East Africa and Nigeria, declared that "the object of trade . . . may be defined as the exchange of the commodities of one country for those of another . . . ." <sup>1</sup> thus reflecting the common administrative preoccupation with exports and imports. Internal and local exchange, which were of uncertain scope and value and were difficult to tax, <sup>2</sup> were virtually ignored. In contrast, the great bulk of external trade of the Gold Coast, at least, was sea-borne and hence much simpler to measure. <sup>3</sup>

Emphasis upon foreign trade was further encouraged by the Gold Coast Government's heavy reliance upon customs duties for revenue, which was particularly important in view of the

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<sup>1</sup>Lugard, The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa, op. cit., p. 477.

<sup>2</sup>See P. T. Bauer, West African Trade: A Study of Competition, Oligopoly and Monopoly in a Changing Economy, London, 1963, Chapter 27.

<sup>3</sup>Overland external trade has probably been under-estimated in the past, but it is still considered to have been very small from 1900, compared with overseas trade. See Szereszewski, op. cit., Appendix C.





long-standing African opposition to direct taxation.<sup>1</sup>

Royalties, financial surpluses earned by the railways, various licence fees, and proceeds from the postal services all rendered contributions to the Government's earnings; but between 1913 and 1920, for example, duties on exports and imports regularly supplied more than 50 per cent of the annual revenue.<sup>2</sup> Customs duties continued to be a vital source of administrative and development funds throughout the remainder of the period up to 1939. This, alone, would have been sufficient to ensure a keen Government interest in external trade.

However, there were other factors in operation, too. One was the apparent belief that a country's economic welfare depended, fairly simply, upon its external trade. With a bias perhaps induced by the historical experience of the trading nations of Western Europe, colonial authorities, in Britain and within the Gold Coast, tended to isolate and over-emphasise the role of foreign trade in economic development. A result was that the terms 'external trade' and 'economic development' were used almost interchangeably.<sup>3</sup> There is, of course, a

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<sup>1</sup>Direct taxation, on a permanent basis, was not established in the Gold Coast until during World War II.

See Kimble, op. cit., pp. 168-91, 199-201, and 306-15.

Bourret, op. cit., *passim*.

Hailey, op. cit., pp. 666-67.

<sup>2</sup>Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Cmd. 1600, "Report of a Committee on Trade and Taxation for British West Africa," 1922, pp. 6-17.

<sup>3</sup>For example, see Lugard, The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa, op. cit., Chapter 23.



relationship of varying importance between them, but a growing foreign trade is not necessarily an assurance of all-round development, or of development in the best direction.

An expanding import trade, for example, is not necessarily a sound index of achievement.<sup>1</sup> In the case of industrial countries, imports include substantial quantities of equipment and raw materials which aid the growth process, by feeding and building home industries, but "it seems to be a general characteristic of the imports of colonial territories that they are heavily weighted towards consumer goods."<sup>2</sup>

Such commodities may be essential to the functioning of a particular economy, but they are finished goods and do not assist in the expansion of domestic secondary industries. Large imports of consumer goods may even hinder the development of home industries, by absorbing foreign exchange and by saturating internal markets. The latter factor is especially important when goods from the metropolitan country are concerned, since they will not be checked by protective tariff barriers, a device which can safeguard local industries.

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<sup>1</sup>Although, of course, it may adequately reflect trends in consumption.

<sup>2</sup>Tony Killick, "External Trade," Chapter 14 in The Economy of Ghana, op. cit., p. 335.

P. Lamartine Yates has shown that consumer goods constituted 75.4 per cent in 1913 and 62.9 per cent in 1953 of the Gold Coast's total imports. See his Forty Years of Foreign Trade, New York, 1959, p. 196.





Until 1932, when Great Britain formally accepted the principle of imperial preference in its application to foreign trade, however, the argument in favour of colonial territories establishing their own consumer industries was not usually regarded as self-evident. It was assumed that the ideal economic situation was one in which a particular territory could obtain all its material goods at the lowest possible price, even if that did mean importing them all. Later, a number of disadvantages of free trade came to be recognised. First, colonial dependencies tended to purchase practically all of their manufactured goods from overseas sources, which meant that supplies could not be guaranteed, delays were usual, prices need not be related to local purchasing power, and port facilities - always expensive to maintain - had to be greater than would otherwise have been the case.

Second, colonies paid for their imported manufactures by exporting primary products, and the 'terms of trade' have been moving to the disadvantage of primary producers for a long time.<sup>1</sup> In other words, the prices of manufactured goods have shown a persistent tendency to increase faster than the prices of raw materials, thereby undermining the purchasing power of primary producers. Third, so long as imports were financially and physically dominated by consumer

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<sup>1</sup>See A. G. Ford, "Economic Growth: A Theoretical Outline," Chapter 1 in Planning and Growth in Rich and Poor Countries, ed. Walter Birmingham and A. G. Ford, London, 1966, pp. 15-61.

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principles of taxation were not so well established as they are today. The present position is that the

principles of taxation were not so well established as they are today.

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goods, then the capital goods required to speed internal growth were difficult to obtain.

Undue emphasis upon external trade can also be criticised when it relates to exports. Export production, despite considerable size and growth, may bear little relevance for the economy as a whole. A striking, though familiar example is provided by the Gold Coast's gold mining industry. Increased mining activity and production after the turn of the century caused an impressive swelling of the country's external trade, through exports of gold and imports of machinery and equipment.<sup>1</sup> Since the mining companies were expatriate concerns, however, both profits and taxes were paid outside the Gold Coast.<sup>2</sup> The African labour force employed by the mines was proportionally small, though significant in the non-traditional sector, and included a core of migrant workers from neighbouring countries who usually returned home with their savings.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, it can be argued that the domestic, as opposed to territorial, economy directly benefited far less than might be supposed from the growth of gold mining.<sup>4</sup> Indirect gains

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<sup>1</sup>See Szereszewski, *op. cit.*, Chapters 3 and 4.

<sup>2</sup>Until 1939 the mining companies paid only small rental fees to African land-owners, and a 5 per cent royalty on profits to the Gold Coast Government. After 1939 a 15 per cent export tax on gold was added.

See Bourret, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Szereszewski maintains that gold mining was greatly inferior to cocoa farming as a vehicle for economic growth. See Szereszewski, *op. cit.*, Chapter 7.

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accrued through the mining companies' agitation for railroad development, but the line to Kumasi was built for other reasons as well. The eastern railway, as shown in an earlier section, owed almost nothing to the mining industry for its origin.<sup>1</sup>

The opposite was true, however, of the cocoa industry, which was based upon indigenous capital, enterprise and labour. Profits from cocoa farming raised the living standard of a substantial part of the population, but this was achieved without excessive expenditure on imported consumer goods; cocoa farmers ploughed a large proportion of their profits back into further investment, thereby creating extra growth potential.<sup>2</sup> Again, customs duties upon cocoa exports provided the Government with a major revenue source. Nevertheless, the cocoa industry has always been considered an exceptional development for a backward economy and, unfortunately, it appeared to vindicate the Administration's undue emphasis upon external trade. Before 1939, very little attention was given to projects not concerned with increasing export production, or to improving the economy's self-sufficiency.

The high value placed upon external trade can also be related to those ideals of British colonial theory embodied

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<sup>1</sup>Above, pp. 157-58.

<sup>2</sup>See Polly Hill, "Social Factors in Cocoa Farming," Chapter 18 in Agriculture and Land Use in Ghana, op. cit., p. 282.





in Lugard's concept of the 'Dual Mandate'. Adherents to that school of thought maintained that Britain held a responsibility to the native peoples concerned and to mankind as a whole, to foster the development, economic and otherwise, of dependent territories.<sup>1</sup> Central to this view was the fact that the industrial countries of the world required many raw materials from tropical areas, material which could not be forsaken because the inhabitants of such regions lacked the motivation or the means to undertake their provision. Thus,

. . . the tropics are the heritage of mankind, and neither, on the one hand, has the suzerain Power a right to their exclusive exploitation, nor, on the other hand, have the races which inhabit them a right to deny their bounties to those who need them.<sup>2</sup>

It does not require a cynic to suggest that the Dual Mandate, which was a synthesis of widely prevailing views rather than an original thesis,<sup>3</sup> could be considered an attempt to bestow moral sanction upon the exploitation of the dependent Empire. Western Europe, in particular, needed tropical materials to support many aspects of its economic

<sup>1</sup>F. D. Lugard, "The Crown Colonies and the British War Debt," op. cit., p. 248, and The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa, op. cit., passim.

<sup>2</sup>Idem., The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa, op. cit., p. 61.

<sup>3</sup>Many of Lugard's views were derived from Joseph Chamberlain. See ibid., pp. 60-61.

Lord Hailey has traced the origin of the 'trusteeship' principle to the anti-slavery campaigns. See his The Future of Colonial Peoples, London, 1944, pp. 14-16. See, also, H. Duncan Hall, "The British Commonwealth and Trusteeship," International Affairs, Vol. 22 (1946), pp. 199-213.





life. An inherent right to take them, in the name of 'Civilisation', was assumed. Mankind at large would benefit, while the inhabitants of the tropics, it was argued would inevitably and automatically gain from European rule, and from access to European material and spiritual goods.

Despite the criticisms which could be made of it, there is little doubt that the Dual Mandate thesis was widely, and sincerely, accepted amongst Lugard's contemporaries, including politicians and colonial administrators.<sup>1</sup> The emphasis, throughout, upon the necessity of transferring tropical products from their natural location to the industrial workshops of the world also helps to explain the official preoccupation in the Gold Coast, and elsewhere, with external trade. Indeed, the promotion of trade, according to this philosophy, could almost be taken as the sole justification for the British presence.

Another formative factor which remains to be considered is the element of national self-interest which was always present when colonies were concerned, and predictably emerged to the fore in times of adversity for the mother country. It owed little to Lugard's rather grandiose notion of advancing backward societies and furthering world civilisation. Rather

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<sup>1</sup>Lugard's written works were generally regarded as authoritative and practical statements on British rule in Africa. As such, they were used as reference manuals for administrative problems. See Margery Perham's "Introduction" to the 5th ed. of The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa, op. cit., and her biography of the man, himself - Lugard: The Years of Adventure.

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it was more of a relic from times when colonies were uncompromisingly regarded as possessions, not trusts, to be managed according to the best interests of the ruling state.

#### Lugard

. . . admitted . . . that European brains, capital, energy have not been, and never will be, expended in developing the resources of Africa from motives of pure philanthropy. . . .,<sup>1</sup>

but perhaps under-estimated the significance of Britain's own economic interests in securing colonial development. Although, for example, the proposals of the Empire Resources Development Committee were rejected, they nevertheless reflected a general feeling that colonial resources could be better utilised, to Britain's advantage.<sup>2</sup> The mood was not dispelled by criticism of the E. R. D. C., but channelled into more respectable schemes. One was the 1929 Colonial Development Fund, which was established partially for the object of alleviating unemployment in Britain, by creating colonial markets for British goods.<sup>3</sup>

It should be apparent, from the preceding discussion, that the policy governing the Gold Coast's external trade cannot be understood without reference to a number of broad issues affecting the Empire as a whole. Although care was sometimes

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<sup>1</sup>Lugard, The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa, op. cit., p. 617.

<sup>2</sup>See Hancock, op. cit., pt. 1, pp. 106-10.

<sup>3</sup>See E. N. Omaboe, "The Process of Planning," Chapter 18 in The Economy of Ghana, op. cit., p. 441.





taken to accommodate the special economic features of individual dependencies, the main lines of colonial trade policy were drawn according to general principles applicable to them all.<sup>1</sup> Until the outbreak of World War I, the cardinal tenet of policy for Great Britain and her dependencies was free trade. This was not the case with the Dominions, however, which had been enthusiastically campaigning for imperial preference since the first Colonial Conference in 1887. Well before 1914 the Dominions had begun to establish preferential measures amongst themselves, often extending them to include the United Kingdom. A persistently controversial issue was the refusal of Great Britain to offer the Dominions reciprocal advantages.<sup>2</sup>

War-time conditions, in the period 1914-'18, wrought a substantial change in this position, by emphasising Britain's vulnerable dependence upon overseas sources for many of her basic materials. Problems of supply were consequently uppermost in contemporary economic thought. This, and the emotional solidarity of the Empire through the war-years were factors which subsequently lent their weight to the cause of imperial preference. A popular belief arose which held that the spiritual harmony of the Empire, and its economic cohesion, could be maintained beyond the War by means of commercial ties.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Charlotte Leubuscher, "The Policy Governing External Trade," Chapter 3 in Mining, Commerce and Finance in Nigeria, pt. 2 of The Economics of a Tropical Dependency, ed. Margery Perham, London, 1948.

<sup>2</sup>See W. K. Hancock, op. cit., pt. 1, passim. Frederic Benham, Great Britain under Protection, New York, 1941, passim.

<sup>3</sup>See ibid., pp. 94-110. Rixford Kinney Snyder, The Tariff Problem in Great Britain, 1918-1923, Stanford, 1944, Chapter 3.





Political strength was given to the movement by the reports of various war-time bodies of inquiry including the Balfour Committee and the Dominions Royal Commission<sup>1</sup> - which tended to favour future economic policies based upon protection for Britain and, or, preferential arrangements for the Empire. In 1917 the Imperial War Cabinet unanimously adopted a resolution in favour of imperial preference.<sup>2</sup> The resolution was remarkable in that it was the first occasion, since "the fall of the old colonial system,"<sup>3</sup> that a British government had accepted the principle of a preferential trade policy.

However, implementation of the resolution, except in the Dominions, proved to be a very slow and cautious process. It was not facilitated by the revival of the deeply ingrained free trade bias which occurred at the end of the War. Moreover, conversion to a preferential system of trade

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<sup>1</sup>Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Cd. 9035, "Final Report of the Committee on Commercial and Industrial Policy after the War," the 'Balfour Committee', 1918. This Report exerted an important influence on subsequent British economic policy. It presented a strong case for protective tariffs to safeguard a wide range of home industries.

Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Cd. 8462, "Final Report of the Royal Commission on the Natural Resources, Trade, and Legislation of Certain Portions of His Majesty's Dominions," 1917.

<sup>2</sup>See Hancock, op. cit., pt. 1, pp. 126-27.

<sup>3</sup>The Fall of the Old Colonial System is the title of a book by Robert Livingston Schuyler (London, 1945), which concerns the establishment of free trade in Britain during the nineteenth century. 1860 was the date at which colonial preferential tariffs were finally cancelled.





required that, first, duties be imposed upon many commodities, in order that the countries of the Empire might be afforded preferential treatment. Particularly in the case of foodstuffs, this demanded a high degree of political stoicism from governments which were democratically elected; higher food prices were not likely to be popular with an electorate which had just suffered four years of deprivation and shortage. Consummation of the policy decision made in 1917 was held in abeyance until the turmoil of the Great Depression brought into power a National Government strong, and desperate, enough to forsake caution and apprehension. The result was the Import Duty Act of 1932 - which endorsed existing tariffs and drastically curtailed the 'free list' - and the subsequent Ottawa Conference, also in 1932, at which the hard bargaining over imperial preference rates was undertaken.<sup>1</sup>

The onset of the Depression marked, throughout much of the world, the beginning of a period of intense economic nationalism. Many countries believed it necessary to protect home industries and their balance of payments - from foreign competition rendered dangerous by falling prices - by instituting tariff and quota barriers, to exclude foreign goods

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<sup>1</sup>See: Hancock, op. cit., pt. 1, passim.

Asher Isaacs, International Trade: Tariff and Commercial Policies, Chicago, 1948, Chapters 17 and 18.

W. S. Woytinsky and E. S. Woytinsky, World Commerce and Governments: Trends and Outlook, New York, 1955, pp. 256-58.

Ronald S. Russell, Imperial Preference: Its Development and Effects, London, 1947, Chapters 1 to 4.





as much as was practicable. Other countries were persuaded to do likewise by the actions of their rivals. To make such devices effective, the 'most-favoured-nation' clause, which was a traditionally important component of trade agreements, was renounced or circumscribed. The result was that trade negotiations and treaties were based upon bilateral agreements, and the free trade principle became even more obsolete.<sup>1</sup>

The immediate significance to the Gold Coast of the momentous changes in the framework of world and imperial trade which occurred after 1914 is not very clear, partially due to economic circumstances peculiar to that country. Throughout the period under review, the export trade of the Gold Coast was heavily dominated by two commodities, gold and cocoa. In the case of the former product, normal aspects of trade policy were irrelevant. The entire gold output of British West Africa was sold in the London Gold Market, and there was no question of affording it preferential treatment. Gold was too important as an international currency to be subjected to tariff manipulation.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See: Leubuscher, op. cit., p. 140.

Woytinsky and Woytinsky, op. cit., pp. 251-53 and 257-58.

Isacacs, op. cit., Chapter 17.

<sup>2</sup>London possessed the only 'free' gold market - that is one not controlled by a central bank - in the world, which made it particularly important.

See Paul Einzig, International Gold Movements, London, 1931, Chapter 13.





Cocoa, however, is a normal trade commodity, and was treated as such. From the early years of the century it was subject, upon import into the United Kingdom, to a revenue duty,<sup>1</sup> and in 1919 Empire suppliers were awarded a one-sixth reduction in this tariff.<sup>2</sup> The Concession operated in favour of the Gold Coast and other Empire producers - in 1938 the United Kingdom received 95 per cent of its cocoa imports from countries within the Empire - but to a lesser extent than might have been anticipated, due to a relative decline in the British market for cocoa. By the financial year 1926-'27, the United Kingdom consumed only 12.8 per cent of the world supply, whereas the United States - the major market - absorbed 38.4 per cent of the world's cocoa output.<sup>3</sup>

The dominance of the United States, in this respect, increased through the remaining years before 1939. In the American market Empire cocoa received no preferential treatment, but cocoa was not taxed at all upon import. However, Gold Coast produce was at a disadvantage in the United States, due to the superior quality and lower transportation

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<sup>1</sup>Isaacs, op. cit., p. 352.

Revenue tariffs are compatible with a free trade policy, in that they are designed to yield revenue, and do not discriminate against goods from particular countries.

<sup>4</sup>Russell, op. cit., p. 98.

<sup>5</sup>Data from Cmd. 5845, op. cit., Appendix C.



costs of Central and South American cocoa.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, imperial preference was of little value for the Gold Coast's principal export commodities.<sup>1</sup> Greater benefits accrued to certain minor products, including timber, but the overall effect was small.<sup>3</sup> In countries where imperial preference was effective, the system afforded Empire goods competitive advantages in Empire markets. It therefore operated as a permissive factor which encouraged production for export, perhaps in areas previously unable to compete in world markets, and provided incentive for exports to flow in a limited range of directions.

In some cases, however, imperial trade policy involved more stringent controls than the gentle persuasion of tariff relief. Regulation of exports was sometimes prompted by the real or apparent strategic necessity of limiting the flow of important materials. At other times, controls were established in order to protect, or subsidise, certain home or colonial industries by ensuring that they received adequate supplies of raw materials. A third important motive for regulating

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<sup>1</sup>Governor Clifford, of the Gold Coast, commented upon this situation quite early in the industry's development. See: Sir Hugh Clifford to W. H. Long [Secretary of State for the Colonies], 15 August, 1917, in Metcalfe, op. cit., pp. 559-63.

<sup>2</sup>Essential to this statement is the fact that in 1937 cocoa and minerals accounted for 96 per cent of the total value of exports. See Bourret, op. cit., p. 127; Anyane, op. cit., Appendix 3; Metcalfe, op. cit., Appendix D.

<sup>3</sup>For details of the rather complicated tariff arrangements for timber, see Russell, op. cit., pp. 58-61.



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exports was the desire to maintain or encourage production within the Empire, by controlling price fluctuations.<sup>1</sup>

The Gold Coast was less affected than many colonies by restriction and direction of exports, and most of the measures which did influence the export trade were stimulated by war-time conditions. At the outbreak of World War I, two considerations were deemed most relevant in connection with the Gold Coast's overseas trade. Germany was to be deprived of materials she customarily imported and, second, a commodity priority list was to be prepared which would allocate the available shipping space for export goods according to their relative value to the war-effort. Both of these policy guides created problems for the Gold Coast.

Prior to the War, Germany had been the most important market for Gold Coast cocoa, directly absorbing one-third of the total amount exported. Substantial quantities had also been indirectly purchased by Germany, through trans-shipments from Great Britain and Holland. Although the United States, in compensation, began to increase its intake of Gold Coast cocoa, the loss of German, and some neutral,<sup>2</sup> markets meant that large quantities could not be sold. Exports were further

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<sup>1</sup>See Benjamin Bruce Wallace and Lynn Ramsay Edminster, International Control of Raw Materials, Washington, 1930, Chapter 1.

<sup>2</sup>Exports to neutral countries, including Holland, were also restricted, to prevent goods from indirectly reaching Germany.

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restricted by the low priority claim of cocoa on the available shipping space.<sup>1</sup>

The restrictions on markets and shipping generally ended with the conclusion of the War, although it was not until 1919 that the preferential - in favour of Empire buyers - export duty on oil palm kernels was introduced. The main details of the scheme have been reviewed in an earlier section,<sup>2</sup> and it is sufficient to recall at this point only that the measure was withdrawn, as a failure, in 1922. An example of export control which reacted favourably, for a time, upon the Gold Coast is the Stevenson Plan for rubber. It was introduced in 1921, a depression year for world trade, by which time Gold Coast rubber production had slumped markedly from its high war-time level. In application the Stevenson Plan involved only the rubber-producing British colonies of south-eastern Asia, where export quotas were fixed in order to introduce an artificial element of scarcity, and hence secure higher world prices.<sup>3</sup>

From a short-term viewpoint the scheme functioned admirably. The price of rubber rose spectacularly from 10d.

<sup>1</sup>See Sir Hugh Clifford's Speech in the Legislative Council, 25 October, 1917, in Metcalfe, op. cit., pp. 563-67.

<sup>2</sup>Above, pp. 176-77.

<sup>3</sup>Hancock, op. cit., pt. 1, pp. 121-22.

Wallace and Edminster, op. cit., Chapter 6.

Leubuscher, op. cit., pp. 152-54.



per pound in 1921 to 4 shillings per pound in 1925.<sup>1</sup> High prices revived rubber production not only in the colonies concerned, but also elsewhere. The Gold Coast's output returned to the level prevailing immediately after the end of the War.<sup>2</sup> Eventually, however, as also occurred as a result of the artificial scarcity induced by the oil palm kernel scheme, production from other parts of the world increased sufficiently to cause a downward trend in world prices. The scarcity produced by the Stevenson Plan was not sheltered by a monopoly on production, and the price of rubber fell to 8½d. per pound in 1928, the year in which the scheme was abandoned.<sup>3</sup> In common with other industries producing primary commodities, the rubber industry suffered severely during the Depression, which caused prices to fall even lower. Surprisingly, rubber production in the Gold Coast managed to recover once more in the later 1930's.

The Gold Coast's import trade was for most of the period remarkably unconstrained by official policy. As a result of the Anglo-French Niger Convention, of 1898, the principle of the 'open-door' governed the import policy of

<sup>1</sup>Hancock, op. cit., pt. 1, p. 122.

<sup>2</sup>For example: 1919: £33,637  
1925: £33,946  
1926: £53,473

See Anyane, op. cit., pp. 137-38 and Appendices 2 and 3.

<sup>3</sup>Hancock, op. cit., pt. 1, p. 122.





a number of West African territories, including the Gold Coast.<sup>1</sup> The agreement stipulated that for a period of thirty years, each party should grant the other equality of treatment in the markets of their respective colonies. In practical terms, this agreement was extended to many other countries through the operation of the most-favoured-nation clause. Effectively, a system of non-discrimination was created,<sup>2</sup> and tariffs were instituted solely for the purpose of gathering revenue.

Departure from the open-door tradition occurred in 1934, when the Importation of Textiles Ordinance established the right to apply quotas to cotton and artificial silk piece-goods entering British West Africa. The Ordinance was potentially discriminatory, in that its provisions could be aimed specifically at goods of a particular national origin. In practice the measure was used only against Japanese goods, for which a low-price textile market had been rapidly growing. At the same time, a second ordinance was introduced which established extra duties on a number of Japanese imports, including cement, galvanised iron sheets and paint.<sup>3</sup>

The declared object of these measures was to protect the markets of certain British industries, although the relatively small proportion of British West Africa's imports

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<sup>1</sup>The territories concerned were the Gold Coast, Nigeria, the Sudan, Dahomey, the Ivory Coast and Chad.

<sup>2</sup>See Leubuscher, op. cit., pp. 156-63.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 158-59.





obtained from Japan indicates that the threat was " . . . more potential than real . . . . "<sup>1</sup> It has been argued that the Ordinances were really in the nature of a compensatory safeguard against the possible future loss of markets in East Africa, where international agreements prohibited the introduction of protective measures. An interesting consequence of this legislation, and one which undermined its alleged purpose, was that products from India, which were also very inexpensive, tended to replace the Japanese goods.

In 1937 the quota system was extended to indiscriminately cover all non-Empire countries exporting cotton and artificial silk-piece goods to British West Africa.<sup>2</sup> The use of the quota system as a protective instrument, even after denunciation of the Anglo-French Niger Convention, was made necessary by an earlier treaty with Holland. The earlier agreement required tariff equality for Dutch goods, and, through the most-favoured-nation clause, for imports from many other countries, too.<sup>3</sup> Hence, a system of preferential tariffs could not be established. For this reason, the Ottawa agreements did not affect the Gold Coast.

Thus, despite the keen Government interest in the Gold

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 158-63.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 163.

Hancock, op. cit., pt. 2, p. 308.

For details of the Anglo-Dutch Convention of 1871, see Douglas Coombs, The Gold Coast, Britain and the Netherlands, 1850-1874, London, 1963, Appendix 2.



Coast's external trade, the country was only marginally affected by the important developments in imperial trade policy which occurred between 1914 and 1939. With the exception of the years from 1914 to 1918 - the War period - little attempt was made to control exports, while the import trade remained largely untouched by the important issue of imperial preference versus free trade.

#### THE MONETARY SYSTEM IN THEORY AND IN PRACTICE

The importance of a commodity which can serve as a medium of exchange, a measure of value, a store of wealth, and as a mode of payment is firmly established in economic theory.<sup>1</sup> Such a commodity is known as money, some form of which appears indispensable to the functioning of any but a very primitive economy.<sup>2</sup> In Africa a variety of products traditionally met some of the requirements of money,<sup>3</sup> though usually less adequately than their modern counterpart. Traditional currencies tended to find only local, or regional, acceptance, or were incapable of fulfilling all the functions

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<sup>1</sup>eg. see Edward Nevin, Textbook of Economic Analysis, London, 1960, Chapter 20. A. C. L. Day, Outline of Monetary Economics, Oxford, 1957, Chapters 1 and 2.

<sup>2</sup>Although intermediate economies sometimes use more than one commodity to fulfil all the requirements of money. Cattle, for example, may be used as a store of wealth, but cannot be used in small exchanges; something else must serve as a mode of payment.

<sup>3</sup>E. K. Hawkins, "The Growth of a Money Economy in Nigeria and Ghana," Oxford Economic Papers, Vol. 10 (1958) p. 344.





of money.<sup>1</sup> In view of Western experience, it may seem that gold dust was potentially satisfactory, but the extensive use of so many other currencies suggests that in practice this was not the case. A possible reason is that gold may not have been available in sufficient quantities to be used in general business transactions, particularly since commercial exchange in Africa is dominated by low-value operations.<sup>2</sup>

At the beginning of the twentieth century United Kingdom coinage supplied the bulk of legal tender money in British West Africa, being supplemented by a variety of other European and American coins.<sup>3</sup> In addition a number of traditional currencies, which in value probably exceeded the whole issue of legal-tender money, continued to circulate.<sup>4</sup> Although widely used in connection with external trade after the 1870's, British coins were slow to find acceptance in

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<sup>1</sup>See Paul Bohannon, "The Impact of Money on an African Subsistence Economy," Journal of Economic History, Vol. 19 (1959), pp. 491-92. Following Karl Polanyi "The Economy as Instituted Process," in Trade and Market in the Early Empires, ed. Karl Polanyi, Conrad M. Arensberg and Harry W. Pearson, Glencoe, Illinois, 1957, pp. 264-66, Bohannon differentiates between 'general' and 'special' purpose money, the former meeting all the requirements of money and the latter less than all.

<sup>2</sup>Soon after 1900 the farthing (one-quarter of a penny) was found to be of too large a denomination for use in many transactions in West Africa. Clearly, gold would have been even less suitable. See G. L. M. Clauson, "The British Colonial Currency System," Economic Journal, Vol. 54 (1944), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit., and Hawkins, op. cit., pp. 344-45.





the domestic economies of the West African territories. Manillas (bronze ingots), for example, remained more popular in Nigeria until they were prohibited, as a currency, by Government decree in 1949.<sup>1</sup>

The supply of official money was governed by simple procedural arrangements. Any person, or institution, could import British gold and copper coins at face value cost, the United Kingdom Treasury bearing the burden of transportation charges. Between 1894 and 1911, however, the import of silver coinage - the most important type of legal-tender money - was legally monopolised by the Bank of British West Africa, an expatriate concern. The Bank imposed a small charge on issues of silver coin. The monopoly was revoked in 1911, allowing anyone to import silver currency, and bringing British West Africa into line with the remainder of the colonial Empire.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, a number of problems arose from the operation of what was essentially a rather haphazard monetary system, and led to fundamental changes in 1912. The local governments of the West African territories were especially dissatisfied with the Treasury's appropriation of the

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<sup>1</sup>Hawkins, op. cit., pp. 344-45.

<sup>2</sup>Clauson, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

Kimble, op. cit., p. 38.

J. Mars, "The Monetary and Banking System and the Loan Market of Nigeria," Chapter 4 in Mining, Commerce, and Finance in Nigeria, op. cit., pp. 177-78.



seignorage on currency issues. In view of the difficulties encountered in finding revenue funds, the colonial administrations argued that they were entitled to at least some of the profit made on currency issued in their territories. The Colonial Office tended to support this view, and in 1899 pointed out that during the previous year the Bank of British West Africa had obtained from the Mint £309,250 in new silver coins. The profit on that alone was about £150,000.<sup>1</sup> However, the Treasury remained quite adamant and refused to consider proposals for a profit-sharing scheme, suggesting instead that the colonies should issue their own currencies.<sup>2</sup>

West African merchants were also critical of the existing monetary system. One grievance concerned the service charge levied on imported silver coin by the Bank of British West Africa, but it ended with the withdrawal of the Bank's monopoly. It was also felt that there was a need for a note issue of legal-tender currency. Commerce, particularly in the external trade sector, was expanding rapidly, and coins were becoming increasingly cumbersome in many large-value business transactions.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>W. T. Newlyn and D. C. Rowan, Money and Banking in British Colonial Africa: A Study of the Monetary and Banking Systems of Eight British African Territories, Oxford, 1954, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>3</sup>Kimble, op. cit., p. 38.  
 Clauson, op. cit., p. 5.  
 Mars, op. cit., p. 178.





Underlying the whole system, however, was an even more fundamental problem. Although it was relatively simple to obtain additional currency issues, no adequate provision existed for withdrawing surplus currency from circulation. In the United Kingdom silver coin was legal-tender only to the value of 40 shillings. Thereafter, banks had no obligation to accept it. The commercial banks could, in practice, pay greater amounts of silver coinage into their accounts with the Bank of England, but the arrangement could be terminated at any time the Treasury chose. Moreover, an additional service charge was made by the Bank of England for the facility. Thus, the West African territories were faced with the potential danger of being unable to rid themselves of surplus coinage in a period of economic depression. A refusal, on the part of the Treasury, to repatriate silver coin would lead to a loss in the liquidity of legal-tender money, which could eventually severely damage the monetary system, and the general economic welfare of the colonies concerned.<sup>1, 2</sup>

In 1911 a Departmental Committee of Inquiry, headed by Lord Emmott, was established by the Colonial Secretary to investigate the currency problems of West Africa. The

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<sup>1</sup>Clauson, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

<sup>2</sup>One of the principal objections of the Treasury to sharing the seignorage with colonial governments was that the latter might unscrupulously 'force' currency into circulation, with the result that subsequent repatriation of silver would damage the British monetary system. The argument was not made more precise than this, and Newlyn and Rowen (op. cit., p. 38) dismiss it as implausible.

Underlying the whole system, however, was the

more fundamental problem. Although it was relatively

to obtain additional currency issues, no attempt was made

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would eventually severely damage the monetary system and

the general economic welfare of the nation. However, it

In 1911 a Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry was

and found, was established by the Treasury

to investigate the currency problem in that year.

<sup>1</sup>Chambers, op. cit., pp. 4-5

<sup>2</sup>One of the principal objectives of the Treasury in  
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subsequent report, which was published in 1912,<sup>1</sup> recommended that the British Colonies in West Africa should be allowed to issue their own currency. As a result, the West African Currency Board was established in 1912,<sup>2</sup> and instructed to make the necessary arrangements. The Board was authorised to mint and issue currency, to replace that of the United Kingdom, in West Africa, and was to operate independently of the local governments. Its headquarters were in London.

The West African pound was placed upon the sterling exchange standard, and its exchange rate with sterling fixed in the ratio 1:1. It was also required that the Currency Board should maintain a fund of sterling assets equal, at least, in value to its entire issue. In practice, it became customary for the Board to maintain a sterling coverage of 110 per cent, the surplus being regarded as a necessary precaution against the possible depreciation of long-term securities.

The new coinage was first released in 1913, and notes

<sup>1</sup>Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Cmd. 6426, "Report of the Departmental Committee Appointed to Inquire into Matters Affecting the Currency of the British West African Colonies and Protectorates," 1912.

<sup>2</sup>The literature dealing with the history and operation of the Board is voluminous.

See: Clauson, op. cit., pp. 2-13.

Mars, op. cit., pp. 177-85.

Newlyn and Rowan, op. cit., passim.

H. A. Shannon, "Evolution of the Colonial Sterling Exchange Standard," International Monetary Fund Staff Papers, Vol. 1 (1951), pp. 334-54; and "The Modern Colonial Sterling Exchange Standard," International Monetary Fund Staff Papers, Vol. 2 (1952), pp. 318-62.





in 1916. Arrangements for issuing and redeeming currency were on an automatic basis, and involved only the Currency Board and the commercial banks, of which there were two in the Gold Coast - the Bank of British West Africa and Barclays (D. C. and O.). All external monetary transactions were conducted through the banks. When a colonial branch bank required more local currency, perhaps to cover extra withdrawals by its clients, then the head office in London deposited the equivalent amount of sterling with the Currency Board. The Board's colonial agents, who were present in each of the four territories, were subsequently instructed to release the necessary West African currency to the particular branch bank concerned. Conversely, in the event of a local bank accumulating an unwanted surplus of local currency, West African funds could be paid to the Board's agents, and in London sterling would be given to the bank's head office.

Thus, both issue and redemption were automatic processes, which the currency authority was statutorily obliged to undertake at the request of a local bank. In London, the Board converted most of its pure sterling funds into sterling assets, securities of varying 'life' and liquidity. Interest from its investments was used to maintain the total fund at 110 per cent of its currency issue, and any remaining profits were distributed amongst the four West African governments.

In comparison with its predecessor the new monetary system was a substantial improvement, and its advantages were clear. Although it was some years before bank notes





became widely used in the internal sector of the economy,<sup>1</sup> their issue facilitated the conduct of high-value business transactions. External commerce was also freed from some of the complications of the old system by the ease and certainty with which local funds could be effectively converted into sterling and foreign currencies. Banking was also rendered simpler, since it was no longer necessary to ship coin overseas, or to purchase it from London. The resultant lowering of costs was partially extended to local merchants and producers, in the form of reduced service charges on foreign transactions.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps most significantly, West African currency was guaranteed parity with sterling, and full convertibility. It was this assurance which later brought forth general recognition that the arrangements were well-suited to externally-oriented economies.<sup>3</sup> Thus:

This system is an admirable one for a country which desires to maintain the external status of its

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<sup>1</sup>Hawkins, op. cit., p. 346, notes that "great difficulty was experienced in promoting a note circulation and notes were often at a discount over their face value in internal exchange.

<sup>2</sup>See Clauson, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

<sup>3</sup>For example:

Ida Greaves, "Colonial Trade and Payments," Economica, Vol. 24 (1957), pp. 47-58.

Edward Nevin, Capital Funds in Underdeveloped Countries: The Role of Financial Institutions, London, 1961, p. 8.

Hawkins, op. cit., pp. 341-42.

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currency as a first consideration . . . .<sup>1</sup>

One advantage was that the fixed exchange rate with sterling, and hence other currencies, provided security for overseas suppliers of capital and merchandise.<sup>2</sup> They were protected from the depreciation of their assets which would have followed any devaluation of the West African pound.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, local exporters were shielded from the adverse consequences of an upward re-valuation of the currency, a far more unlikely event.<sup>4</sup>

The stable exchange rate thus provided encouraging conditions for both external trade and capital movements. However, whereas there is no doubt that the West African territories needed imports of capital, it can be argued that it was British trade, not that of West Africa, which primarily benefited from currency stability. Clearly, British exporters were more likely to require a stable exchange rate than local producers, who were less likely to find it moving unfavourably for them.

<sup>1</sup>Hawkins, op. cit., p. 342.

<sup>2</sup>Greaves, op. cit., *passim*.  
Nevin, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

<sup>3</sup>eg. A devaluation of West African currency by 50 per cent, in terms of sterling, would have meant that goods delivered to the Gold Coast before the change would have been subsequently worth only half as much in sterling.

<sup>4</sup>This, of course, was due to the greater possibility, under normal circumstances, of the West African pound, rather than sterling, being devalued.

See Greaves, op. cit., p. 51.



The second major advantage of the new system was that the four West African territories were relieved of the possibility of balance of payments difficulties. It was not essential that exports should equal imports. Because local currency was freely convertible into sterling, internal as well as external earnings could be used to pay for imports. The only limitation on imports was the level of purchasing power, not foreign exchange, within the colonies. From this aspect, trade between the Gold Coast and the United Kingdom was effectively the same as trade between constituent parts of the same country. The same was true of trade between the Gold Coast and other members of the Sterling Area. When trade occurred between the Gold Coast and a non-sterling country, the necessary foreign exchange was drawn from, and paid into, the foreign currency fund of the Sterling Bloc. Thus, colonial trade balances were transferred to the accounts of the Sterling Area as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

Advantages accrued to both Great Britain and her West African colonies<sup>2</sup> from this arrangement. Under normal circumstances a country cannot allow its imports to exceed exports for more than a short period.<sup>3</sup> If exports cannot be

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 47-48.

<sup>2</sup>The general considerations made here are applicable outside West Africa, for the Currency Board system developed there was subsequently extended to other parts of the Colonial Empire.

<sup>3</sup>This is still true, despite the modern International Monetary Fund's practice of providing short-term loans to offset deficits in the balance of payments of its member states.





increased to quickly correct such an imbalance, then steps must be taken to restrict imports. Less essential consumer imports may be hardest hit by restrictive measures, but the more important capital goods may also be affected in serious cases. The West African colonies were not required to face such a problem, and were consequently able to import goods which were needed, or desired, regardless of foreign exchange considerations. So far as the United Kingdom was concerned, on the other hand, home manufacturers did not find their markets fluctuating wildly with changes in colonial balances of payments; their markets were more stable than might otherwise have been the case.<sup>1</sup>

With time, however, a number of disadvantageous features of the West African-type monetary system became apparent. One of the more important criticisms was that such a monetary system is far better suited to the development of an economy's external orientation than it is to its internal growth.<sup>2</sup> For example:

The colonial sterling exchange standard does not adapt itself easily to internal economic development and its introduction in the form that it took in West Africa may have created obstacles to internal development at the same time as it assisted the export sector, as it was designed to do.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Fluctuations were checked rather than completely stopped, as variations in the exports of colonial territories tended to cause smaller variations in their internal purchasing power.

<sup>2</sup>See Tony Killick "The Monetary and Financial System," Chapter 13 in The Economy of Ghana, op. cit., p. 308.

<sup>3</sup>Hawkins, op. cit., p. 354.





The automatic process which adjusts the amount of currency in circulation is triggered by changes in a colony's sterling holdings; before it will release additional local currency, the Board must be presented with an equivalent amount of sterling; conversely, the Board withdraws currency from circulation when it is required to release sterling. Fundamentally, then, the amount of local currency in circulation is related to the amount of sterling to which a colony has claim. Since sterling holdings reflect the overall balance of external payments, this, too, is related to the currency supply. It is the relationship between currency circulation and the balance of payments which is believed to exert a restrictive influence on internal growth.

Under the conditions imposed by the 'one hundred per cent' sterling exchange standard, local currency issues must be fully covered by a fund of sterling assets, which are owned by the particular colony but held by the currency authority. A colony receives sterling only in the form of export earnings, loans, grants and private investments. Hence, it follows that a necessary condition of an expansion in the currency supply should be an increase in the stock of sterling, in one, or more, of these forms. Furthermore, it is necessary that there should be a net increase; the surplus balance of sterling receipts over sterling payments - including capital movements - should be greater than previously. Conversely, a decline in the currency level automatically follows the

The business formed which within the amount of

company is estimated as required by contract in a colony's

existing holdings. Below it will receive additional local

company, the Board will be empowered with an additional amount

of sterling currency; the Board will be empowered to

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essentially, then, the amount of local currency in circulation

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Respective influence on interest growth.

Under the conditions suggested by the 'one hundred per

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in issue, or more, if there were. Furthermore, it is necessary

that some amount of a net investment in sterling should be

existing reserves with sterling balances - including capital

movements - should be greater than sterling. Conversely,

a decline in the current level of sterling assets will



occurrence of a deficit balance of external payments.<sup>1</sup>

The direct relationship between the balance of payments and the currency supply has been established. However, not all money exists in the form of currency, and it is important to consider the above arguments within the context of the total money supply.<sup>2</sup> The main alternative to legal-tender currency is bank-money, which consists of savings, deposits and loans held in bank accounts. Part of any surplus on the balance of payments will be held in this medium, and hence will not contribute to an expansion of local currency. In an advanced economy bank-money is used in perhaps ninety per cent of the commercial transactions which occur,<sup>3</sup> but is much less important in an underdeveloped economy. Prior to 1939, it comprised less than half the total money supply of British West Africa.<sup>4</sup>

Changes in the level of bank deposits and savings tend to parallel fluctuations in the currency stock of

<sup>1</sup>It is important to emphasise that the 'balance of payments' referred to here is neither the balance of trade nor the balance of payments on current account, but the overall balance of payments, which includes capital flows.

<sup>2</sup>Traditional currencies have been ignored, because they have not been measured and because they rapidly decreased in significance after the establishment of modern currencies.

<sup>3</sup>Nevin, Textbook of Economic Analysis, op. cit., p. 256.

<sup>4</sup>Philip W. Bell, The Sterling Area in The Postwar World: Internal Mechanism and Cohesion, 1946-1952, Oxford, 1956, p. 169.



consequence is a slight delay in the payment of the balance.

The direct relationship between the balance of payments

and the current account has been established. However, not

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colonial economies. When the public's holdings of currency are high, then more can be spared for depositing in bank accounts. In times of financial adversity, on the other hand, people subsidise their low currency holdings by converting bank-money into currency,<sup>1</sup> thereby reducing the level of bank-money. Thus, the amount of money held in current, deposit and saving accounts is basically determined, in the same way as the currency supply, by fluctuations in the overall balance of external payments. Both currency and bank-money (with the exception of bank loans) levels are swollen by surplus balances, and both are lowered by a reduction in the surplus, or by a deficit balance.

Under the sterling exchange standard, as it existed in West Africa before 1939, there can be no fiduciary issues of currency by the Government to affect the total money supply.<sup>2</sup> However, there are no statutory limitations to bank-lending, and it is theoretically possible for a commercial bank to distort the relationship between the money supply and the balance of payments by its lending activities. It could, for example, expand the supply of bank-money by increasing its loans at a time when the total money supply is contracting, in response to a balance of payments movement.

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<sup>1</sup>This is particularly important in an underdeveloped economy, where a high proportion of commercial transactions require currency transfers.

<sup>2</sup>There could be no fiduciary issues so long as local currency was required to be backed by a 100 per cent sterling coverage.





In the West African territories, however, this situation did not arise. Bank-lending was of negligible significance to the total money supply, and banks increased their loan commitments only when the economic prospects were good - when the money supply was expanding anyway, due to favourable external trade balances. Potential borrowers in under-developed countries are rarely able to provide securities acceptable to banks operating in the Western tradition. Even in 1947, despite the relative prosperity of the immediate post-World War II years, bank-lending accounted for only 5 per cent of the total money supply of the Gold Coast.<sup>1</sup> The proportion was certainly much smaller before 1939. Hence, in the case of the Gold Coast, at least, it seems clear that the total supply of money was very closely tied to the balance of external payments.<sup>2</sup>

The principle objection to a monetary system of this nature is that it contains no provision for adjusting the

<sup>1</sup>Hawkins, op. cit., p. 348.

<sup>2</sup>For further exposition of this argument see:

Greaves, op. cit., p. 55

Newlyn, and Rowan, op. cit., p. 201.

Hawkins, op. cit., p. 342.

Killick, "The Monetary and Financial System," op. cit., p. 310.

Mars, op. cit., p. 200.

Shannon, "The Modern Colonial Sterling Exchange Standard," op. cit., p. 322.

A. Hazlewood, "Colonial External Finance Since the War," Review of Economic Studies, Vol. 21 (1953-54), p. 32.

Samuel I. Katz, "Development and Stability in Central and West Africa: A Study in Colonial Monetary Institutions," Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 5 (1956), p. 290.





money supply, to accord with domestic requirements. Hence, it makes no allowance for internal growth,<sup>1</sup> and is, in fact, a depressive influence upon domestic production, thereby tending to perpetuate the external dependence of the economy unnecessarily. If the overall balance of payments remains static, and the supply of money constant, then there is no incentive for internal growth. Increased production would merely encourage lower prices, particularly since consumer expenditure on imported goods is relatively inelastic below a certain level.<sup>2</sup> In the event of a steady growth in the money supply, due to a succession of increases in the surplus balance of payments, it is still possible that the money supply is insufficient to support optimum internal economic growth. Should the money supply contract, on the other hand, domestic production will also decline.<sup>3</sup>

Although rather flimsy, the available evidence suggests that between the two World Wars these theoretical considerations were significant in the Gold Coast. Until the mid-1920's however, the internal economy was probably not significantly hampered by monetary conditions. The influx of capital, for

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<sup>1</sup>See Killick, "The Monetary and Financial System," op. cit., p. 310.

<sup>2</sup>Imports vary with the amount of money available, but tend not to decline below a certain level because many necessary consumer commodities are not produced in colonial territories.

See Bell, op. cit., p. 168.

<sup>3</sup>Mars, op. cit., p. 200.





investment in mining and transportation development, had caused a large expansion in the supply of money. On the other hand, the growth of the export trade in the first quarter of the century was accompanied by a similar expansion of the import trade, and therefore could have affected the money supply very little.<sup>1</sup>

Between 1925 and 1939 the amount of currency in circulation increased by an average rate of only one per cent per year,<sup>2</sup> and it is reasonably certain that the rate of increase of bank-money was no greater. There seem to be two main reasons for such a slow growth. The onset of the Depression at the end of the 1920's was perhaps most important, since it caused severe contraction throughout the economy. A second factor was that by the mid-1920's most of the inflow of capital had ceased. The mining industry had long before established its fundamental structure, and by the end of 1926 three-quarters of the expenditure on Guggisberg's Development Plan had been made.<sup>3</sup>

It has been indicated elsewhere that there was a close statistical correlation between exports and currency in circulation (a correlation coefficient of 0.65) between 1925

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<sup>1</sup>For export-import data see Metcalfe, op. cit., Appendix D.

<sup>2</sup>Hawkins, op. cit., p. 351. This compared with an average rate of 27 per cent per year from 1947 to 1956.

<sup>3</sup>Sir Frederick Gordon Guggisberg, The Gold Coast: A Review of the Events of 1920-1926, and the Prospects of 1927-1928, Accra, 1927, p. 73.





and 1939.<sup>1</sup> Hence, the slow expansion in the money supply seems to have been significantly influenced by the poor performance of the export sector in that period. In five of the fourteen years exports were lower than in 1925, and it was not until the last three years that there was a significant improvement. It may also be noted from the accompanying table that the balance of trade showed little improvement until the final two years of the period.

Gold Coast Trade, 1925 - 1939\*

	(£) <u>Exports</u>	(£) <u>Imports</u>	(£) <u>Balance</u>
1925	10,890,223	9,782,619	1,107,604
1926	12,104,800	10,285,876	2,818,924
1927	14,350,355	13,770,542	579,813
1928	13,824,875	12,200,045	1,624,830
1929	12,677,716	10,082,381	2,595,335
1930	11,287,388	8,953,770	2,333,618
1931	9,300,620	4,803,874	4,496,746
1932	8,348,879	5,605,219	2,743,660
1933	8,048,484	5,543,354	2,505,130
1934	8,117,456	4,848,800	3,268,656
1935	9,971,535	7,956,780	2,014,755
1936	12,636,899	11,656,719	980,180
1937	16,218,193	19,228,363	- 3,010,170
1938	15,425,496	10,380,323	5,045,173
1939	16,235,288	10,626,284	5,609,004

\* Source: Metcalfe, op. cit., Appendix D.

The period from 1925 to 1939 was thus marked by relative stagnancy in the external sector of the economy - including both trade and capital flows - and only slow growth in the money supply. Theoretically, this should have resulted in the checking of growth within the internal sector of the

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<sup>1</sup>Hawkins, op. cit., pp. 347-48.





economy. In reality, too, that seems to have been the case.<sup>1</sup> It may have been that there was even an absolute contraction in domestic production. Population growth, the decline in the use of traditional currencies, and the spread of market-oriented productive activities all created a new demand for modern money, and could have absorbed the slight annual increase in currency.

A study of Nigeria, in the same period, has indicated that conditions were much the same as in the Gold Coast, and that the internal economy was either contracting or static. Ever-increasing demands for modern currency, and the absence of significant growth in its supply, meant that prices and production in the internal economy declined notably.<sup>2</sup>

Yet another aspect of the West African monetary system which attracted criticism was the accumulation of large sterling balances, held by the Currency Board, in London. The Board exchanged West African currency for sterling, which originated in the flow of money into the four territories, and invested the sterling funds in securities of a varying nature.<sup>3</sup> Because of the required sterling cover, however, the Board was prohibited from investing in the colonies whose monetary affairs it managed. With that

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 347-48.

<sup>2</sup>Mars, op. cit., pp. 195-201.

<sup>3</sup>For details of investments see Shannon, "The Modern Colonial Sterling Exchange Standard," op. cit., pp. 324-29.





exception, the Currency Board enjoyed a nominal freedom in its choice of investment projects, although the British Government's sanction was necessary. In practice, however, funds were placed entirely in securities offered by the United Kingdom and various Dominion Governments.<sup>1</sup> Particularly after 1945, this policy gave rise to charges that it provided Britain and the Dominions with massive capital loans, which could be ill-afforded by colonies conspicuously in need of capital themselves.<sup>2</sup>

In summary, there were two main criticisms to be made of the monetary policy operating in the Gold Coast prior to 1939. The close relationship between the money supply and

<sup>1</sup>W. T. Newlyn, "The Colonial Empire," in Banking in the British Commonwealth, ed. R. S. Sayers, Oxford, 1952, pp. 425-26.

<sup>2</sup>See:

Mars, op. cit., pp. 190-95.

I. C. Greaves, "The Sterling Balances of Colonial Territories," Economic Journal, Vol. 61 (1951), pp. 433-39.

"Sterling Balances and the Colonial Currency System: A Comment," Economic Journal, Vol. 63 (1953), pp. 921-23.

"Colonial Trade and Payments," op. cit., pp. 47-58.

Arthur Hazlewood, "Sterling Balances and the Colonial Currency System," Economic Journal, Vol. 62 (1952), pp. 942-45.

"Sterling Balances and the Colonial Currency System: A Reply," Economic Journal, Vol. 64 (1954), pp. 616-17.

"Memorandum on the Sterling Assets of the British Colonies: A Comment," Review of Economic Studies, Vol. 22 (1954-'55), pp. 72-74.

"Colonial External Finance Since the War," Review of Economic Studies, Vol. 21 (1953-'54) pp. 31-52

"The Economics of Colonial Monetary Arrangements," Social and Economic Studies, Vol 3 (1954).

B. M. Niculescu, "Sterling Balances and the Colonial Currency System: A Comment," Economic Journal, Vol. 64 (1954), pp. 618-19.

F. H. H. King, "Sterling Balances in the Colonial Monetary System," Economic Journal, Vol. 65 (1955), pp. 719-21.





the overall external balance of payments strengthened the external dependence of the economy, by hampering internal development. This was particularly marked between about 1925 and 1939, when external trade lost much of the dynamism which had characterised it earlier in the century, and the money supply ceased to expand rapidly. A second criticism is that the rigidity of the 100 per cent sterling exchange standard prevented the Gold Coast from making the best use of its external earnings. Fiduciary issues, which could have been used to ameliorate economic distress in the 1930's, were forbidden, in contrast to the situation in the metropolitan country where the entire note issue became fiduciary after 1931.

#### SUMMARY

In the period extending from the beginning of the twentieth century to 1939, economic policy in the Gold Coast, reflecting the interests of both local and metropolitan Governments, was primarily concerned with facilitating the development of external trade. The improvement of the road network, the construction of railroads and the building of Takordi Harbour were all undertaken mainly for this purpose, and proved to be very worthwhile projects. In addition to promoting export and import flows, the modernised transportation system generated and re-directed internal trade movements, although they were regarded as an incidental effect.

To encourage, and improve the quality of, agricultural production for the export trade the Gold Coast Government





also instituted a number of ancillary services, which were designed to assist farmers in both the growing and marketing of their crops. Most of these were specifically associated with the rapidly expanding cocoa industry. The research and advisory work undertaken by the Department of Agriculture was not fully utilised by the industry, but the introduction of improved varieties of cocoa undoubtedly aided its growth.

More indirectly, the establishment of the West African Currency Board and the sterling exchange standard currency system, by the Colonial Office, also furthered the development of the Gold Coast's external trade. The provision of a stable and convenient modern currency encouraged faith in the use of money in the more traditional areas of society. It also rendered both banking and other mercantile functions undertaken by the European community much simpler, and slightly less expensive. A more intangible advantage of the currency system was that it assured foreign investors and merchants that their goods were safe from the dangers of devaluation. This factor may have contributed to the readiness with which capital and equipment were made available for large-scale construction projects.

Viewed in the context of the growth of exports and imports over the period as a whole, the Gold Coast Government's efforts would appear to have been attended by success. Exports rose from £559,733 in 1901 to £16,235,288 in 1939; imports increased from £1,795,187 to £10,626,284. However, the bulk of the increase in exports, and, through export





returns, in imports was due to the growth of the cocoa industry, which remained essentially an indigenous enterprise. The Government's assistance to cocoa farmers was of marginal importance, as is indicated by the Nowell Commission's description of farming standards, and there can be little doubt that the industry would have expanded without it.

Again, the Administration's attempts to promote a broadening of the base of the export trade, however well-intended, cannot be regarded as successful. Cocoa and minerals, mainly gold, dominated exports in 1939 to a much greater degree than they had done in 1901. A long series of experimental agricultural and manufacturing projects ended in failure during the 1920's and 1930's.

A positive disadvantage of the official policy which prevailed throughout the period was the resultant external orientation of the economy. Preoccupation, on the part of the British authorities, with external trade meant that little attention was given to improving the internal sector of the economy. In prosperous times, therefore, many commodities were imported which could conceivably have been produced within the Gold Coast, including staple foodstuffs. In times of adversity, on the other hand, the country was short of even essential items. More significantly, the performance of the whole economy was unduly geared to the export trade. Consequently, a trade recession affecting cocoa alone, could seriously hamper growth and undermine living standards. The





Depression of the early 1920's effectively retarded economic development for a decade, since it touched all components of the export trade, and thereby severely depressed activity throughout the economy.



## CHAPTER VI

### BRITISH RULE AND THE GOLD COAST

#### ECONOMY, 1939 - 1957

#### ALTERATIONS IN THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

During World War II a number of decisive changes occurred in British colonial policy. Some were due to the predictable, though greatly accelerated, progress of trends apparent in the 1930's, but still others were inspired by the War, itself, which has since come to be recognised as a vital catalyst of social change.<sup>1</sup> Of primary importance, as a basis for policy, was the new-found level of consciousness of imperial objectives, occasioned by war-time conditions. Particularly in the early stages of the War, the Allied cause depended desperately on colonial resources of a great variety of materials, a circumstance which stimulated thought on how they could best be developed. Perhaps even more significantly, the Allies depended upon the cooperation of their colonial peoples, who were not always satisfied to remain part of a sacred British 'trust'.

In Asia the Japanese occupation armies were generally

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<sup>1</sup>It was also recognised, by some, at the time. See M. Fortes, "Impact of the War on British West Africa," International Affairs, Vol. 21 (1945), pp. 206-19.





welcomed, at first, by peoples formerly under British rule,<sup>1</sup> and it soon became clear that the future of the Empire could not be contemplated indefinitely with the traditional vague complacency. The philosophy of the Dual Mandate, with its uncertain objectives, no longer accorded with reality in the Empire. In so much as any single factor can be considered particularly significant in influencing the direction of official thought, the decision to grant India her independence was outstanding.<sup>2</sup> Though made largely in an attempt to secure the collaboration of nationalist groups in defending India, and the rapidly deteriorating Allied position in Asia, it was a decision which marked British acceptance that the mandate to rule colonial peoples could not be maintained indefinitely.

By 1945 Ceylon, too, had been guaranteed independence. However, neither this nor the assurance to India reflected a complete and fundamental change in colonial policy. Real significance lay in the gathering and crystallization, during the War, of a sense of urgency in settling the future of the colonial Empire. The decisions to grant independence to India and Ceylon were manifestations of this new mood.

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<sup>1</sup>Burma's national leaders, in particular, were very amenable to their country being included in Japan's 'Co-prosperity Sphere', although their initial enchantment faded later. See Charles A. Fisher, South-East Asia: A Social, Economic and Political Geography, London, 1964, p. 447.

<sup>2</sup>See Hugh Tinker, India and Pakistan: A Political Analysis, New York, 1963, pp. 32-40.





Eventual self-rule for dependent territories had periodically been declared an object of British policy since early in the nineteenth century,<sup>1</sup> but it remained a rather vague goal until the end of World War I.<sup>2</sup> Then, the formulation of the League of Nations' trusteeship policy for mandated territories, and Lugard's exposition of the Dual Mandate, contributed to a clearer view of colonial policy. The trusteeship doctrine found popular acceptance and was officially endorsed by Britain during the 1920's.<sup>3</sup> Implicitly, at least, acceptance of this principle meant that the corollary principle of preparation for self-government had also been accepted.<sup>4</sup>

In practice, however, the ends of colonial policy were given very little serious consideration, since the time when dependent peoples would be capable of governing themselves

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<sup>1</sup>H. Duncan Hall, Mandates, Dependencies and Trusteeship, London, 1948, pp. 93-97.

<sup>2</sup>Sir Charles Jeffries, Transfer of Power: Problems of the Passage to Self-Government, London, 1960, Chapters 2 and 3.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Chapter 3.

Hall, op. cit., Chapter 8.

H. Duncan Hall, "The British Commonwealth and Trusteeship," International Affairs, Vol. 22 (1946), pp. 199-213.

Lord Hailey, The Future of Colonial Peoples, London, 1944, pp. 14-16.

Lord Hailey, The Position of Colonies in a British Commonwealth of Nations, London, 1941, pp. 8-11.

<sup>4</sup>Hall, Mandates, Dependencies and Trusteeship, op. cit., p. 94.



seemed very remote.<sup>1</sup> The Dominions had, in some cases, taken centuries to attain full independence, and the constitutional future of the more primitive dependencies did not appear to be a matter pressing for immediate attention.<sup>2</sup> Even in India, despite the sophistication of indigenous society and two centuries of association with British rule, political development was slow. The 1935 Government of India Act, which established elected ministries responsible for provincial administration, " . . . was bitterly opposed by the right-wing of the [British] Conservative Party, led by Winston Churchill, as a betrayal of the British mission of Imperial trusteeship."<sup>3</sup> In Africa, consequently, societies were considered so rudimentary that " . . . it was not necessary to look further for an objective than an adherence to the doctrine of trusteeship."<sup>4</sup> It is in this context that the decisions to grant India and Ceylon independence were so significant. They established, beyond doubt, that dependencies peopled by non-Europeans could secure emancipation from British rule.

Although the ultimate political goal appeared far-distant,

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<sup>1</sup>Jeffries, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>2</sup>Margery Perham, The Colonial Reckoning, London, 1963, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup>Tinker, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>4</sup>Lord Hailey, "British Colonial Policy," in Colonial Administration by European Powers, ed. Jose de Almada, et. al., London, 1947, pp. 83-97.





a gradual but highly significant change occurred in the official attitude towards colonial economic development in the 1930's. Essentially, it amounted to recognition that a more positive policy was required than had been apparent before. Within Britain the active role of the State in certain areas of the economy had been steadily growing since shortly before the First World War. In the colonies, however, the principles of laissez-faire economics were more resistant to change, and it was not until the Great Depression that State action became respectable.

A notable precedent was set by the 1929 Colonial Development Act, which established an annual fund of £1 million for the purpose suggested by the name of the Act, and in the hope that colonial development would provide a measure of relief for unemployment in the United Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> The Act was not a marked success, due to the limited size of the fund and to the inability of most colonies to undertake increased loan commitments during the Depression, but in principle it was a radical innovation.<sup>2</sup> Together with other practices which became orthodox during the 1930's, including the regular payment of grants-in-aid to balance budgetary deficits, it meant that "the duty of Governments actively

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<sup>1</sup>Barbu Niculescu, Colonial Planning: A Comparative Study, London, 1958, pp. 58-60.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>'Brittanicus', "Economic Planning in the British Colonies," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 27 (1948-49), p. 60.





to intervene in the economic field was no longer seriously in dispute when the Second World War broke out."<sup>1</sup>

The reports of a succession of commissions of inquiry, appointed to investigate various conditions in the colonies, in the later 1930's had also contributed to this development, by emphasising the economic hardship and backwardness present in many territories.<sup>2</sup> The situation was particularly grim in the West Indies, where economic grievances had led to outbreaks of rioting and other forms of civil disorder. In 1938 the Moyne Commission began a study of West Indian problems, and its preliminary report, in 1940, persuaded the British Government to frame the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of that year.<sup>3</sup> A sum of £5 millions per year, for ten years, was set aside for development projects in the colonies. Little was actually accomplished under this act, due to war-time exigencies, and in 1945 it was superseded by yet another, with the same title, which increased the development fund to £12 millions per year, for ten years.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, by 1945 Great Britain was firmly committed to

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<sup>1</sup>Lord Hailey, An African Survey, Revised 1956: A Study of Problems Arising in Africa South of the Sahara, London, 1957, p. 1306.

<sup>2</sup>Rita Hinden, Empire and After: A Study of British Imperial Attitudes, London, 1949, pp. 138-39.

<sup>3</sup>Niculescu, op. cit., pp. 60-61.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 61-63.



a substantial investment programme in the colonial Empire. The Colonial Development and Welfare Acts of 1940 and 1945 may logically be considered the successors to the Act of 1929. Though perhaps hurried by war-time conditions, they were, however, also influenced by the realisation during the later 1930's that progress had been insufficient to justify the British presence in many colonial territories. Other developments were more clearly the products of World War II, and some continued to be effective after 1945, profoundly influencing the nature and direction of economic change.

In West Africa the introduction of commodity marketing controls was, from many points of view, the most significant and enduring war-time innovation. Following the outbreak of World War II, in 1939, responsibility for marketing West African export produce was assumed by the United Kingdom Government.<sup>1</sup> In part, this was due to the war-time need of a centralised trade authority, capable of operating under conditions inimical

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<sup>1</sup>See: Charlotte Leubuscher, Bulk Buying from the Colonies: A Study of the Bulk Purchase of Colonial Commodities by the United Kingdom Government, London, 1956, passim.

David E. Carney, Government and Economy in British West Africa: A Study of the Role of Public Agencies in the Economic Development of British West Africa in the Period 1947-1955, New York, 1961, passim.

F. J. Pedler, Economic Geography of West Africa, London, 1955, Chapter 17.

F. M. Bourret, Ghana: The Road to Independence, 1919 - 1957, Stanford, 1960, Chapter 9.





to private enterprise, which could make optimum use of the Empire's material resources, limited shipping space, and scarce foreign exchange funds.<sup>1</sup> As such, the West African arrangements were merely part of a much wider scheme for controlling the Empire's trade.

Another consideration in the case of the West African, and certain other, colonies was the need to protect dependent economies from the adverse effect of the disruption of world markets and inflationary tendencies, which accompanied war-time shortages.<sup>2</sup> In these respects, the bulk-purchasing policy of the United Kingdom was particularly beneficial to the West African cocoa industry. By agreeing to buy the entire output of cocoa, the British Government prevented the large-scale shrinkage in production, and incomes, which would have otherwise followed the loss of markets. This policy was adopted despite the certainty that shipping space and markets could not be found for all the cocoa produced.

Controls over the movement of different colonial products were not instituted simultaneously, nor were they identical in form. They were established according to requirements at a particular time for a specific commodity, and hence varied considerably. By the end of the War, however, the United Kingdom Government, through its Ministries of Food,

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<sup>1</sup>Leubuscher, op. cit., pp. 1-5.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 7.





Supply and Materials, plus other departments, was the sole purchaser of practically the whole colonial production of export items.<sup>1</sup>

Between 1939 and 1942, the selling of West African products, to the respective Government departments of the United Kingdom, was organised by the firms which had been operating in the export trade of the four colonies before the War. For this purpose, they were licensed to act as official buying agents. A fundamental change in the system was made in 1942, when the West African Produce Control Board was established and given authority over the purchasing agents. The Board was responsible to the Colonial Office, which was hence given the power to control the economies of the territories involved by manipulating the prices paid to producers by the Control Board. Through this medium, it was possible for the Colonial Office to prevent excessive inflation, by lowering the prices paid to local producers, and to encourage the production of particular commodities.

In the immediate post-War period, the conditions of world trade were such that there was deemed to be a continued need for the West African Produce Control Board, and it survived intact until 1947. Shipping shortages, depressed markets, and inadequate supplies of many raw materials and manufactured goods conspired to handicap the recovery of international trade. The sterling area's shortage of dollars

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<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.



also helped to persuade the British Government that it should continue to regulate Empire trade.

Gradually, however, restrictions were eased on many commodities which had been strictly controlled during the War, and the W. A. P. C. B.<sup>1</sup> was slowly de-centralised after 1947. In each of the four British West African territories local marketing boards were established to control specific groups of commodities. Their purpose, however, was fundamentally dissimilar to that of the W. A. P. C. B. Emphasis, in most cases was placed upon the boards' ability to stabilise producer prices, and hence some consumers' incomes, in order to check the development of inflationary pressures within the respective economies. In the Gold Coast the most important of the new agencies was the Cocoa Marketing Board, which was instituted in 1947.<sup>2</sup>

One effect of the wartime changes in colonial economic policy was the strengthening of public enterprise in West Africa.<sup>3</sup> Before 1939 local governments had built and operated infrastructural works, including railways and harbours, but in 1945 most of the export trade was also in government hands. The establishment of the post-War marketing boards perpetuated

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<sup>1</sup>W. A. P. C. B.: West African Produce Control Board.

<sup>2</sup>For reference purposes see the footnotes relating to the W. A. P. C. B. on p. 250, above.

<sup>3</sup>On this point see F. J. Pedler, "Foreign Investment in West Africa," International Affairs, Vol. 31 (1955), p. 460.





this situation. By 1945, too, the local governments and the Colonial Office had become used to manipulating the economy through price policies, and were also interested in broader aspects of economic planning. The Colonial Development and Welfare Acts, which required the governments of all colonial territories to submit development plans, furthered the interest in planning. Thus, during the years of the War, there had been a radical departure from the traditional policy of minimum state interference in the economy, both in Britain and in the colonies. The advent of a Labour Government in Britain helped to make this departure final; the new principle was that the state should intervene whenever necessary, which was a more positive maxim.

Politically, too, post-War changes in the West African territories was both impressive and rapid, reflecting internal and external events. The granting of independence to India, Ceylon and Burma encouraged nationalist-independence movements throughout the colonial Empire, while the new Labour Government in Britain was sympathetic to the aims of such movements. Some of the factors influencing British policy, in this respect, have been considered earlier in the present section, but they cannot be separated from circumstances within the colonies, themselves. Thus, World War II profoundly affected the growth and objectives of nationalism in the Gold Coast, in addition to causing a re-examination by Britain of her colonial policy.





The experience gained by Africans, during the War, of conditions elsewhere, and the example set by the more developed of the Asian colonies lent their weight to the growing force of Gold Coast nationalism,<sup>1</sup> and prompted claims to immediate independence. With a minimum amount of trouble, the transfer of responsibility for governing the country began in 1951. Elections in that year gave the Gold Coast its first home government, headed by Dr. Nkrumah, although paramount authority was still retained by the British Governor. Following gradual modifications in succeeding years, power was finally and totally transferred in 1957, when the Gold Coast became independent Ghana.

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<sup>1</sup>The literature dealing with these phenomena is voluminous, but see the following:

G. E. Metcalfe, Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History, 1807-1957, London, 1964, Chapters 39 to 41.

Ken Post, The New States of West Africa, Harmondsworth, England, 1964, Chapter 1.

Dennis Austin, West Africa and the Commonwealth, Harmondsworth, England, 1957, passim.

Thomas Hodgkin, Nationalism in Colonial Africa, London, 1956, passim.

Dennis Austin, Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960, London, 1964, passim.

David E. Apter, The Gold Coast in Transition, Princeton, 1955, passim.



TRANSPORTATION

Within the transportation sector the duration of World War II was marked by strain, and by the temporary suspension of road-rail competition. At the very beginning of the War road transport was deprived of its competitive status by the closing of the surf ports, for strategic reasons,<sup>1</sup> which tended to channel external traffic through Sekondi-Takoradi, via the rail network.<sup>2</sup> Subsequent restrictions on the import of motor fuel and vehicle components further undermined the viability of the road haulage industry.<sup>3</sup> Neither fuel nor spare parts could be obtained in quantities sufficient to permit operation at the pre-War level. In addition, road construction and maintenance were generally abandoned for the duration of hostilities, leading to widespread deterioration of the road system.<sup>4</sup> Due to the strategic importance of British West Africa, in relation to the North African campaign,<sup>5</sup> some attention was given to repairing main

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<sup>1</sup>Ships using the surf ports were forced to anchor considerable distances off-shore, and hence were extremely vulnerable to submarine attack.

<sup>2</sup>Peter R. Gould, The Development of the Transportation Pattern in Ghana, Northwestern University Studies in Geography,

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup>See: Fortes, *op. cit.*, pp. 206-19. Bourret, op. cit., pp. 142-56.



Within the experimental period the operation of the  
 the II was subject of study, and of the response mechanism  
 of road-rail communication, at the very beginning of the  
 road transport the history of its competitive action in the  
 clearing of the road, for strategic reasons, which  
 tended to channel traffic through the road-transport  
 the rail network.<sup>2</sup> Subsequent restrictions in the  
 rate of road traffic and traffic competition further  
 raised the stability of the road traffic network.<sup>3</sup>  
 Further, but not only, traffic could be obtained in some  
 cases without the least restriction of the road-transport  
 in addition, road communication and maintenance were essential  
 abandoned for the duration of the war, leading to a complete  
 deterioration of the rail system.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the strategic  
 importance of traffic was shown, in relation to the war  
 effort situation, and conditions were given to transport and

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 3. Also in 1941, the importance of the road-transport  
 4. Also in 1941, the importance of the road-transport

roads, but it was inadequate to cope with the heavy damage caused by military vehicles.<sup>1</sup>

Although import restrictions drastically curtailed the flow of normal merchandise into the country, the swollen war-time demand for the whole range of raw materials available in the Gold Coast resulted in exports attaining an almost unprecedented volume.<sup>2</sup> The railways, alone, were not equal to the formidable task of satisfactorily handling virtually the whole of external traffic, and congestion of the transportation system became a serious problem. Difficulties were increased by the employment of the convoy shipping system, which led to the accumulation of vast quantities of export goods, and the periodic dumping of imports, at Takoradi. The undue strain placed upon the railways, by the necessity of moving such large stocks of materials, meant that maintenance work on both tracks and rolling stock lagged behind the unusually high rate of deterioration. By 1945, consequently, the entire transportation system was in sore need of thorough overhauling and extensive renewal. The only significant war-time addition to the system was the short extension railroad from Dunkwa to Awaso, which had been built between 1941 and 1944 to facilitate the development of bauxite mining.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Gould, op. cit., p. 77.

<sup>2</sup>The demand for West African materials was intensified by the loss of British colonies in South-east Asia, to Japan. See: Bourret, op. cit., p. 142; Gould, op. cit., p. 62.

<sup>3</sup>Gould, op. cit., pp. 62-65 and p. 77.





The end of the War brought no immediate relief to the over-burdened railroads. Import restrictions remained in force for several more years, delaying the recovery of the road haulage industry, and external trade continued to expand rapidly, with the result that the transportation sector became even more of a bottleneck.<sup>1</sup> A cautious attempt to tackle the problem was begun in 1948, when plans for a series of development projects were announced by the Gold Coast Government.<sup>2</sup> The proposed total expenditure of £11½ millions included provision for transportation improvements.<sup>3</sup> Little progress was made, however, and in 1951 the various schemes were absorbed by the country's first large-scale Development Plan,<sup>4</sup> the formulation of which had been urged by the Colonial Secretary since 1946.<sup>5</sup> The new expenditure target for development projects was £74 millions.<sup>6</sup> In 1952, Dr. Nkrumah's

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 77-78.

<sup>2</sup>Bourret, op. cit., p. 207.

<sup>3</sup>Gould, op. cit., p. 78.

<sup>4</sup>Bourret, op. cit., p. 207.

E. N. Omaboe, "The Process of Planning," Chapter 18 in The Economy of Ghana, Vol. 1 of A Study of Contemporary Ghana, ed. Walter Birmingham, I. Neustadt and E. N. Omaboe, London, 1966, p. 442.

Gold Coast Government, Development Progress Report for the Financial Year 1st. April, 1951 - 31st March, 1952, Accra 1953, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup>George Padmore, The Gold Coast Revolution: The Struggle of an African People from Slavery to Freedom, London, 1953, p. 215.

<sup>6</sup>Omaboe, op. cit., p. 442.



recently-elected Government decided to reduce the projected completion period for the Plan from ten to five years, and to make a number of minor alterations.<sup>1</sup>

In content, the 1951 Plan was heavily biased towards the development of the economy's infrastructure; approximately 35 per cent of the projected expenditure was allocated to communications, alone.<sup>2</sup> Practically the whole of this proportion was to be spent on roads and railways, the former to receive £8 millions and the latter £16.3 millions.<sup>3</sup> Four new railroads were planned, although only the one joining Achiasi and Kotoku had materialised by 1957. Of the sum designated for railway improvements, £3.3 millions was intended for expenditure on new locomotives and rolling stock. It was used to begin introducing diesel-powered units, to replace the old steam engines.<sup>4</sup>

However, much of the money originally allocated to railway development was actually transferred to the road fund, which eventually increased to £17.3 millions. The initial £8 millions voted for road improvement proved incapable of coping with the problems of war-time damage and rapidly

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 443.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 442.

Ghana Government, Seven Year Plan for National Reconstruction and Development; Financial Years 1963/64 - 1969/70, Accra, 1964, Chapter 6.

<sup>3</sup>Gould, op. cit., p. 80.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 80-82.





increasing road usage.<sup>1</sup> By the end of 1952 there were 11,000 registered commercial vehicles in the Gold Coast, and road haulage was emerging from its war-time obscurity to be the dominant medium of modern transportation.<sup>2</sup>

The inadequacy of the existing transportation structure to serve the country's increasing requirements was, nonetheless, a topical issue in the early 1950's, but concern was not limited to roads and railways. Particularly since 1945, congestion of port facilities had been gathering rapidly, and in the early 1950's threatened to restrict, if not undermine, the Gold Coast's growing prosperity, which was based upon the export trade.<sup>3</sup> In 1952 Seers and Ross, the co-authors of a report dealing with the problems confronting the country's economic development, argued that there was a 'good case' for considering the limited port capacity to be the principle bottleneck in the economy.<sup>4</sup>

Between 1945 and 1951 the tonnage of goods handled by the Gold Coast's ports increased by 158.4 per cent,<sup>5</sup> bringing

<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>3</sup>See Great Britain, Colonial Office, Report on the Gold Coast for the Year 1949, London, 1950, pp. 49-50.

<sup>4</sup>Dudley Seers and C. R. Ross, Report on Financial and Physical Problems of Development in the Gold Coast, Accra, 1952, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup>Figure derived from data in David Hilling, "Tema -- The Geography of a New Port," Geography, Vol 51 (1966), p. 112.





the level of operations very close to the maximum possible. By 1952 Takoradi, the only deep-water port, was dealing with  $2\frac{1}{2}$  million tons of goods per year, and hence functioning at full-capacity.<sup>1</sup> Surf boat facilities at Accra were also fully-extended and, somewhat surprisingly, even the rudimentary services offered at Cape Coast, Winneba and Keta had been re-opened, following the war-time closure, to accommodate the growing external trade.<sup>2</sup>

The remarkable post-War expansion of trade was attributable to a number of factors.<sup>3</sup> In the aftermath of war, with shortages of raw materials throughout the industrial world, markets and prices had been exceptionally favourable to primary producers in general, and had prompted growth in the Gold Coast's export trade. A consequent real rise in national income, in turn, had caused an increase in the demand for imported consumer goods.<sup>4</sup> The import trade had also benefited from the accumulated

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<sup>1</sup>However, extensions which were completed in 1955 increased the port's capacity from  $2\frac{1}{2}$  millions to 3 million tons per year.

Ibid., p. 113

H. P. White, "The Ports of West Africa: Some Geographical Considerations," Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie, Vol. 50 (1959), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Accra was handling about three times as much tonnage as before 1939. See Seers and Ross, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>From £25 millions in 1945 to £155 millions in 1951. Source: Metcalfe, op. cit., Appendix D.

<sup>4</sup>Seers and Ross, op. cit., p. 6. They estimated that the real income of cocoa farmers - the most prosperous members of the population - had by 1950-'51 increased by 100 per cent over the pre-War level.





demand for both capital and consumer goods foregone during the War. Finally, the requirements of development and reconstruction projects necessitated large imports of building materials and equipment.

Despite the continuing favourable market conditions for both exports and imports, however, it was noticeable that the growth rate of external trade slowed after 1949.<sup>1</sup> Seers and Ross attributed this to the inability of port facilities to support further substantial expansion. Evidence for their interpretation gathered, in the form of long delays in the shipment of goods, recurrent shortages of vital imports - particularly building materials - and in the sheer volume of goods stock-piled in port areas. Although port capacity was considered the major restraint, it was also clear that the single-track railway from Takoradi, north to Kumasi, was a further limitation to the volume of trade flows. The railroad was required to carry cocoa from Ashanti, minerals from the Tarkwa and Obuasi areas, bauxite from Awaso, increasing quantities of timber from the forests of the South-west, and to move imports northwards. Hence, the principal internal congestion zone lay between Takoradi and Tarkwa, where all of these flows converged, and where there were no roads adequate to compensate for the excessive pressure on the railways.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

Hilling, op. cit., pp. 111-12.

<sup>2</sup>See Seers and Ross, op. cit., pp. 9-11.





Seers and Ross maintained that the port bottleneck, particularly, was a substantial impediment to the free adjustment of the supply of goods to market conditions within the Gold Coast. Not only did this occasion delays and inconvenience, but it also increased the vulnerability of the economy to the ravages of inflation. In view of the almost complete absence of manufacturing industries, and the low elasticity of local food production, an increase in consumer demand could be satisfied only by extra imports. The fluctuation of incomes from cocoa sales, though restrained by the Cocoa Marketing Board,<sup>1</sup> meant that consumer purchasing power - and hence demand - could, and did, show large upward trends in good years. On the other hand, the ports were operating near full capacity even in bad years, and consumer imports could not be increased to match demand. Consequently, consumer goods' prices were liable to fluctuate wildly, and posed a constant inflationary threat to the whole economy.<sup>2</sup>

Independently of the Seers-Ross revelations, however, it was decided in 1951 that a new port should be built at Tema. Although influenced by the general needs of the economy, the decision owed much to the contemporary interest in the Volta River Project, a scheme for developing the hydro-electric power potential of the Volta, and establishing a domestic

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<sup>1</sup>The Cocoa Marketing Board was principally concerned with moderating fluctuations in cocoa farmers' incomes.

<sup>2</sup>See Seers and Ross, op. cit., particularly Chapter 4.

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aluminum industry to be based upon cheap electricity and local reserves of bauxite. The feasibility of such a project had first been considered during the 1920's, when Guggisberg's Administration had prepared plans for the construction of a dam at Ajena. However, the huge investment programme already undertaken, and the onset of the Depression, had deferred further action. The scheme was re-considered in the late 1930's, but was again delayed, by the outbreak of World War II. In the economically buoyant conditions of the post-War period interest was stirred once more.<sup>1</sup>

From its original conception, the Volta River Project was massive in scope and embraced many aspects of the economy, but a basic condition to its practicability was the development of ancillary transportation facilities. In addition to railways for transporting construction materials and equipment, and bauxite and aluminum, access to a deep-water port was required. The Gold Coast Government appointed a consulting firm, Sir William Halcrow and Partners, to investigate the

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<sup>1</sup>See: Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Cmd. 8702, "Volta River Aluminum Scheme," London, 1952, 22 pp.

Gold Coast Government, Development of the Volta River Basin: A Statement by the Government of the Gold Coast on the Volta River Project and Related Matters, Accra, 1952, 11 pp.

William A. Hance, African Economic Development, New York, 1958, Chapter 3.

R. B. Davison, "The Volta River Aluminum Scheme," Political Quarterly, Vol. 25 (1954), pp. 55-67.

Tony Killick, "The Volta River Project," Chapter 16 in The Economy of Ghana, op. cit., pp. 391-410.



feasibility of the scheme in 1949. The subsequent report emphasised that both the immediate Project and the general requirements of the economy would necessitate the construction of a new port, a view independently supported by the Ministry of Communications and Works.<sup>1</sup> After further consideration, the Consultants recommended a site in the eastern part of the country. Finally, they proposed Tema as the best location for a port which would serve the envisaged aluminium industry and the economy as a whole.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Nkrumah's Government, with which responsibility rested by then, accepted these recommendations in November, 1951, and also announced that work would begin on the new port immediately, regardless of the future of the Volta River Project. Construction of access roads and railways commenced in 1952, and of the first stage of the harbour in 1954.<sup>3</sup> However, Tema was not opened to shipping until 1961.<sup>4</sup> In the meantime further growth in the volume of external trade had to be accommodated by the extensions made to Takoradi in the early 1950's.

<sup>1</sup>Cmd. 8702, op. cit., p. 14.

Gold Coast Government, Development of the Volta River Basin, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit. Tema is situated seventeen miles east of Accra, and was a small fishing village.

<sup>3</sup>Hilling, op. cit., pp. 113-14.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 116.

Keith Jopp, Ghana's New Town and Harbour: Tema, Accra, 1961.





Contrary to the expectations of Seers and Ross, serious inflation was avoided, mainly by increased purchase of imports and, secondly, by growth in domestic production.<sup>1</sup> Thus, in the period 1951-'59, imports expanded in volume by approximately 70 per cent.<sup>2</sup> In part this was made possible by the extension of Takoradi, but the main factor was that the volume of exports declined between 1950 and 1956,<sup>3</sup> thereby freeing physical facilities for handling imports.

One remarkable feature of the transportation sector, in the period from 1939 to 1957, is that it was so patently inadequate. Despite the impressive construction which had occurred in the period prior to the Great Depression, a decade later the same problems had to be faced as at the beginning of the century. By the later 1940's neither the inland road-rail system nor the country's ports were capable of handling external trade in a satisfactory manner. This development pointed to major infrastructural defects in the economy which were gradually eradicated during the 1950's. Indeed, by the time Tema was opened, it was clear that the transportation system was one of the most advanced sectors of the economy, and had a capacity far beyond the country's immediate needs.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Tony Killick, "The Possibilities of Economic Control," Chapter 17 in The Economy of Ghana, op. cit., p. 415.

<sup>2</sup>Figure derived from data in Tony Killick, "External Trade," Chapter 14 in The Economy of Ghana, op. cit., p. 345.

<sup>3</sup>For data see loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>See Ghana Government, Seven Year Plan for National Reconstruction and Development, op. cit., Chapter 6.





## PRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Of the many traditions of British colonial policy which underwent critical examination during the Second World War, two of the most important were the principles that dependent territories should be expected to finance their own development, and that colonial governments should confine their economic activities to providing favourable conditions for private enterprise. To a limited extent both of these principles had suffered compromise before 1939. For example, the persistent refusal of local governments to allow European land-owning in British West Africa had undoubtedly hampered expatriate free enterprise,<sup>1</sup> while the 1929 Colonial Development Act had begun to undermine the doctrine of self-financed development. Nevertheless, it was not until the War that the United Kingdom Government fully recognised the obsolescent rigidity of these two bastions of administrative policy.

The material requirements of the war-efforts, and appreciation of the need for a more positive approach to preparing colonies for self-government, made it clear that colonial development necessitated the provision of external capital and government assistance on a scale not previously admitted. The Colonial Development and Welfare legislation provided part of the capital needed, and also obliged colonial governments to take a greater interest in planning for economic development.

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<sup>1</sup>See Pedler, "Foreign Investment in West Africa," op. cit., pp. 459-68.



Each territory was required, in 1945, to submit a ten-year plan for development and welfare projects to the Colonial Office, in order that its claims to aid, under the 1945 Act, might be studied.<sup>1</sup>

Although local administrations responded to the request with varying degrees of enthusiasm, and realism, they were obliged to consider the problems facing development, and they were offered the means, at least, to begin to implement various projected plans. Through its pointed reference to both 'development' and 'welfare', the 1945 Act also provided colonial governments with the political opportunity to prepare a balanced programme for development. Both economically productive and social investment projects were afforded equal status. Thus, the heavy traditional emphasis on infrastructural improvements needed no longer to be maintained.<sup>2</sup>

The 1951 'Ten-Year Plan for the Economic and Social Development of the Gold Coast, which is usually considered the country's first proper plan,<sup>3</sup> was not a well-integrated programme. The Governor simply invited his departmental staff to prepare a list of the projects which it would be desirable to complete in the succeeding ten years. Subsequently, the initial list was modified according to the capital available.

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<sup>1</sup>Niculescu, op. cit., p. 63.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 57-70.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 110. Omaboe, op. cit., pp. 441-45.





It has rightly been argued that such a method is faulty in that it is likely to result in a series of uncoordinated projects, rather than a balanced advance of the economy as a whole.<sup>1</sup> For example, plans to draw rural labour into industrial employment should be accompanied by plans designed to increase the productivity of the remaining agricultural labour force. Otherwise, food may have to be imported, needlessly, and the advantages of industrialisation may be seriously circumscribed. Nevertheless, in the immediate post-war period faults were to be expected, for colonial administrations were without the necessary experience in economic planning, and received no detailed instructions from their home government.

Of the £74 millions required for proposed expenditure on the 1951 Plan, it was expected that only £3 millions would be requested from the United Kingdom, under the provisions of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act.<sup>2</sup> It was anticipated that £23 millions would be raised in the form of loans, and that the remainder would be supplied from the Gold Coast's own resources. The revisions made in 1952, when the Plan was converted into a five-year scheme and certain details of its content were altered, did not substantially change these arrangements.<sup>3</sup>

As indicated in the previous section, the proposed

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<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Omae, op. cit., pp. 441-43.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.





expenditure was heavily oriented towards the improvement of the infrastructure, and transportation facilities, in particular, were allotted a high proportion of the total investment capital. In addition, 16.9 per cent of expenditure was allocated to 'economic and productive services.'<sup>1</sup> This proportion, which amounted to about £12½ millions, was mainly distributed in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors of the economy, neither of which had benefited significantly from government aid before 1939.

However, despite, or perhaps because of, the overwhelming importance of agriculture in the Gold Coast's economy, only £3½ millions was set aside for agricultural development under the 1951 Plan.<sup>2</sup> The sum of £1 million, included in this figure, was allocated for expenditure on the establishment of a number of agricultural stations. These were to be distributed throughout the country, and were to undertake both experimental and advisory work,<sup>3</sup> very much in the Department of Agriculture's tradition.

In addition, more concrete agricultural development projects were to be initiated by several public agencies.

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<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

Also, see Gold Coast Government, Development Progress Report for the Financial Year 1st April, 1951-31st March, 1952, Accra, 1953, 31 pp.

<sup>2</sup>Omaoe, op. cit., pp. 443-44.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

S. La Anyane, Ghana Agriculture: Its Economic Development from Early Times to the Middle of the Twentieth Century, London, 1963, Chapter 19.

the following results were obtained: the first series of experiments, which were carried out in the laboratory, showed that the rate of reaction was proportional to the concentration of the reactants. The second series of experiments, which were carried out in the field, showed that the rate of reaction was proportional to the concentration of the reactants. The third series of experiments, which were carried out in the field, showed that the rate of reaction was proportional to the concentration of the reactants. The fourth series of experiments, which were carried out in the field, showed that the rate of reaction was proportional to the concentration of the reactants. The fifth series of experiments, which were carried out in the field, showed that the rate of reaction was proportional to the concentration of the reactants. The sixth series of experiments, which were carried out in the field, showed that the rate of reaction was proportional to the concentration of the reactants. The seventh series of experiments, which were carried out in the field, showed that the rate of reaction was proportional to the concentration of the reactants. The eighth series of experiments, which were carried out in the field, showed that the rate of reaction was proportional to the concentration of the reactants. The ninth series of experiments, which were carried out in the field, showed that the rate of reaction was proportional to the concentration of the reactants. The tenth series of experiments, which were carried out in the field, showed that the rate of reaction was proportional to the concentration of the reactants.

The results of the experiments are summarized in the following table:

Series	Location	Reactants	Rate of Reaction
1	Laboratory	Reactants A and B	Proportional to [A] and [B]
2	Laboratory	Reactants A and B	Proportional to [A] and [B]
3	Field	Reactants A and B	Proportional to [A] and [B]
4	Field	Reactants A and B	Proportional to [A] and [B]
5	Field	Reactants A and B	Proportional to [A] and [B]
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8	Field	Reactants A and B	Proportional to [A] and [B]
9	Field	Reactants A and B	Proportional to [A] and [B]
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6	Field	Reactants A and B	Proportional to [A] and [B]
7	Field	Reactants A and B	Proportional to [A] and [B]
8	Field	Reactants A and B	Proportional to [A] and [B]
9	Field	Reactants A and B	Proportional to [A] and [B]
10	Field	Reactants A and B	Proportional to [A] and [B]

The Agriculture and Fisheries Development Corporation, Limited, which had been established in 1948, was responsible for managing many of these until, in 1955, it was absorbed by the Agricultural Development Corporation. The new agency also incorporated, at that time, the functions of the Agricultural Produce Marketing Board.<sup>1</sup> Most of the schemes undertaken by the Agriculture and Fisheries Development Corporation were essentially 'pilot projects'. Their small scale and experimental nature has been held to have been dictated by lessons learned in East Africa, where the massive Tanganyikan groundnuts scheme had proven to be a disastrous and rather salutary experience.<sup>2</sup> Another common feature of the Gold Coast projects was that they were generally concerned with developing both local food-cropping and export production; typical products included poultry, tobacco and groundnuts.<sup>3</sup>

An exception to the general rule was provided by the Gonja Development Scheme which, though officially considered to be of an exploratory nature,<sup>4</sup> was of no mean size. In 1949 the Gonja Development Company was formed, as a subsidiary of the Agriculture and Fisheries Development Corporation, mainly for the purpose of experimenting with mechanised

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<sup>1</sup>Anyane, op. cit., pp. 168-69.

<sup>2</sup>Hailey, An African Survey, op. cit., p. 906.

<sup>3</sup>Anyane, op. cit., p. 169.

<sup>4</sup>Great Britain, Colonial Office, Report on the Gold Coast for the Year 1954, London, 1956, pp. 60-61.





farming techniques and their organisation. The Company was initially based upon Damongo, in the Northern Territories, where it held 32,000 acres of land. Additional land-holdings were subsequently acquired in northern Ashanti.

In addition to its primary objective of attempting to make available to African farmers the benefits of modern, mechanised cultivation practices, the Scheme also involved a substantial rural re-settlement programme. By 1956 large numbers of families had been persuaded to move from the crowded Frafra area, a compound farming region, to the under-peopled Gonja district. In the late 1950's it seemed that the experiments with mechanised farming were a failure - the crops suited to such methods had consistently given poor yields - but it was hoped that the re-settlement project would become a compensatory success.<sup>1</sup>

The 1951 Development Plan also provided approximately £5½ millions for expenditure in the industrial sector of the economy,<sup>2</sup> where, however, progress proved even more elusive. Guidance was provided by the Industrial Development Corporation (I. D. C.), which in 1947 had replaced the Industrial Development Board, yet another post-1945 phenomenon.<sup>3</sup> The I. D. C.

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<sup>1</sup>See: Loc. cit.

Anyane, op. cit., pp. 169-71.

Hailey, An African Survey, op. cit., p. 912.

T. E. Hilton, "Land Planning and Resettlement in Northern Ghana," Geography, Vol. 44 (1959), pp. 227-40.

<sup>2</sup>Omaboe, op. cit., p. 447.

<sup>3</sup>David E. Carney, op. cit., p. 82.





was initially given a rather vague mandate " . . . to secure the investigation, formulation and carrying out of projects for developing industries in the Gold Coast."<sup>1</sup> In the early years of its existence the Corporation attempted to pursue these objectives mainly by propaganda services and by loaning funds to potential industrialists.<sup>2</sup> Under the terms of its original charter, the I. D. C. was permitted to borrow money, for making loans and to meet other commitments, to the extent of £1 million at any one time. Although there was no obligation to do so, the Corporation borrowed only from the Gold Coast Government, which provided interest-free loans.<sup>3</sup>

Late in 1952 the Gold Coast authorities requested Professor W. A. Lewis to undertake an examination of the problems and progress of industrialisation in the country. Lewis's report to the Government, which was published in the following year, was sharply critical of existing policies, and contained recommendations which were subsequently very influential.<sup>4</sup> With regard to the I. D. C., Lewis condemned the indiscriminate lending of money, usually without adequate

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<sup>1</sup>Gold Coast Industrial Development Ordinance, 1947, section 3 (1); quoted in Tony Killick, "Manufacturing and Construction," Chapter 12 in The Economy of Ghana, op. cit., p. 287.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 289.

<sup>3</sup>Carney, op. cit., p. 116.

<sup>4</sup>W. A. Lewis, Report on Industrialisation and the Gold Coast, Accra, 1953, 23 pp.



safeguards, to Africans who often lacked managerial experience, and even competence.

To lend money to entrepreneurs who lack managerial capacity is merely to throw it down the drain. What potential African industrialists lack is not primarily money; it is rather technical knowledge, and experience of factory organisation.<sup>1</sup>

Technical knowledge and managerial experience cannot, of course, be acquired so readily as money. Until they were more evident, however, Lewis recommended that public loans should be made only to existing private enterprises with good prospects, and should be protected by the introduction of supervisory conditions on the part of the responsible public agency.<sup>2</sup>

In accordance with these, and other, suggestions contained in the report, the Government revised its policy towards industrialisation in 1953.<sup>3</sup> Many of the changes were individually small, such as the more definitive government exposition of its view of the role of private enterprise and the laying of plans for constructing a first-class hotel,<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>3</sup>See Killick, "Manufacturing and Construction," op. cit., p. 289.

<sup>4</sup>Lewis suggested that these and other 'fringe-benefits' should be provided to reassure foreign capital. For evidence of their establishment see: Great Britain, Colonial Office, Report on the Gold Coast for the Year 1954, op. cit. Also, see Gold Coast Government, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, "Statement on Capital Investment Made by the Prime Minister, the Honourable Kwame Nkrumah, LL.D., M.L.A. in the Gold Coast Legislative Assembly on Monday, the 1st March, 1954," Appendix to Ghana: Handbook of Commerce and Industry, Accra, 1957.





but together they combined to produce a more encouraging official attitude towards foreign financiers and industrialists. The I. D. C. was also re-organised, and under a revised charter concentrated its energies in two main spheres. Subsidiary companies were to be formed, for specific industrial projects, which would be financed and managed by the Corporation as state enterprises. Once established on a profit-making basis, the subsidiary firms would be sold to private concerns.

Second, the I. D. C. was to cooperate with private firms in the establishment of jointly-owned associate companies.<sup>1</sup>

It was hoped that such a policy would permit a more effective use of public funds than had previously been possible.<sup>2</sup>

By 1956 the I. D. C., which had in the previous year been given permission to increase its capital fund to £4 millions, had actually borrowed £1.4 millions, the entire amount consisting of Government loans.<sup>3</sup> The Corporation's financial resources thus remained very meagre, despite the official view of it as an important pioneering agency. The capital had been distributed unequally in the form of loans to private enterprises (£0.2 millions), and capital commitments to Associated (£0.1 millions) and Subsidiary (approximately the balance) Companies.<sup>4</sup> Most of the Corporation's

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<sup>1</sup>Killick, "Manufacturing and Construction," op. cit., p. 289.

Carney, op. cit., pp. 83-85.

<sup>2</sup>Carney, op. cit., pp. 118-19.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 117.





funds were therefore invested in projects for which it, alone, was responsible. They were predominantly oriented towards production for internal markets, and included companies concerned with furniture, brick and tile manufacturing, small-scale metal working, baking, and soap production.<sup>1</sup> The spatial distribution of these projects reflected the ingrained, traditional economic disparity between various parts of the country; they were concentrated, almost without exception, in the larger settlements of the southern forest and coastal areas.<sup>2</sup>

In order to evaluate the results of the I. D. C.'s operations, it is necessary to anticipate events beyond the period with which this study is immediately concerned. Most of the projects undertaken before 1957 yielded disappointing results, and were eventually abandoned. The reasons for their failure varied, but they might all be classed as 'teething problems' which gave the planners an insight into the difficulties which would have to be faced in the future.

In some cases failure was simply a result of inadequate preliminary investigation into the feasibility of particular schemes. Thus, it was not found until after a factory had been built that local clays, in a certain area, could not be used in the manufacture of bricks. Other problems emulated those

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<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Szereszewski, "Regional Aspects of the Structure of the Economy," Chapter 4 in The Economy of Ghana, op. cit., pp. 89-105.





encountered in a variety of under-developed countries. One was the almost complete lack of skilled and experienced personnel capable of staffing industrial projects. Yet another was the difficulty of establishing markets for new and local products, which is always an expensive problem to solve. The soap factory, in particular, found itself severely handicapped by consumer preference for - or 'brand-loyalty' to - imported products. Its sales tended to fluctuate wildly, according to the availability of foreign alternatives. Finally, the I. D. C. was always limited by a shortage of capital which prevented some of its schemes from even leaving the proposal stage.<sup>1</sup>

Viewed as 'pilot projects', the various I. D. C. undertakings tended to demonstrate the validity of Lewis's opinion that it would be some time before the Gold Coast would be ready for a large-scale industrialisation programme.<sup>2</sup> They also emphasized the formidable difficulties facing even small-scale industrial ventures, and pointed, in particular, to the necessity of finding qualified and competent personnel to staff any future enterprises. On the whole, it appeared that the Gold Coast was unlikely to achieve a significant degree of industrialisation in the foreseeable future.

Nevertheless, the conspicuous failure of experimental public projects tended to overshadow other important developments in the private sector of the economy. An industrial

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<sup>1</sup>See: Killick, "Manufacturing and Construction," op. cit., pp. 287-93.

Carney, op. cit., p. 119 and pp. 169-76.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis, op. cit., p. 22.





census revealed, in 1959, that 80 per cent of the country's manufacturing establishments had been founded since 1939, and 50 per cent since 1949.<sup>1</sup> The census did not include data concerning businesses which had ceased to function since 1939, but it is considered that the inclusion of such information would not affect the overall impression of considerable growth. Nor does the fact that in 1962 about 92 per cent of the manufacturing establishments were one-man concerns detract from this picture.<sup>2</sup>

The increase in the numbers of small-scale enterprises was not, however, officially construed as being indicative of adequate expansion in the industrial sector during the 1950's. Both politically and economically the country required more substantial evidence of industrial development, in order to satisfy national aspirations, and to relieve the economy from its excessive dependence upon imported manufactured goods.<sup>3</sup> In this context, great hopes rested upon the elusive Volta River Scheme, which offered the prospect of a domestic aluminium industry, a huge influx of capital into the country, and electricity sufficient to attract and support

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<sup>1</sup>Killick, "Manufacturing and Construction," op. cit., pp. 274-75.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 275-77.

<sup>3</sup>The political considerations were quite crucial after 1951, since Dr. Nkrumah's government needed to retain popular support not only for the sake of the Convention People's Party, but also in order to hasten full independence.





a host of other modern industries. The envisaged Project was also vast enough in concept to constitute an impressive national show-piece, should it ever materialise.

In 1951 and 1952, following a series of investigations into the Volta River Project during the late 1940's,<sup>1</sup> tripartite negotiations were conducted between the Governments of the Gold Coast and the United Kingdom, and interested aluminium companies. These discussions led to the issue of favourable statements by the two Governments concerned,<sup>2</sup> in which it emerged that the cost of any attempts to implement the Scheme would be shared by the three parties to the negotiations. A Preparatory Commission was also appointed to study the means of implementing the proposals.

British interest was partially inspired by the Government's policy of assisting colonial development, and partly by the attractive prospect of securing a reliable source of aluminium for home industries.<sup>3</sup> At a time when aluminium, which came principally from the Dollar Area, and dollars were in short supply in the Sterling Area, the latter consideration was very important. A condition of British participation in

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<sup>1</sup>For a detailed list of the investigations refer to Gold Coast Government, Development of the Volta River Project, op. cit., Appendix.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.  
Cmd. 8702, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Cmd. 8702, op. cit.  
Tony Killick, "The Volta River Project," Chapter 16 in The Economy of Ghana, op. cit., pp. 391-92.

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the Project was to be the award of special concessions to United Kingdom buyers of aluminium.<sup>1</sup>

During the three years the Preparatory Commission took to conduct its investigations, however, the world supply of aluminium increased considerably, and the Sterling Area also recovered from its acute dollar shortage. The result was that two of the parties to the earlier negotiations - the United Kingdom Government and the aluminium firms - were less interested.<sup>2</sup> Matters were further confused by the rapid progress of the Gold Coast towards independence, which tended to suggest that further discussion should be postponed, pending the achievement of self-government.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, the Project was once more left in abeyance, though much nearer fruition than ever before.

#### TRADE POLICY

In 1939, following the beginning of World War II, the United Kingdom Government began to establish a system of commodity controls over the external trade of Great Britain and her colonies. The British economy, in war-time as in times of peace, depended heavily upon imported food and

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<sup>1</sup>"It was to be a condition of the U. K. 's participation that British buyers should for the first thirty years have an option at the ruling market prices for 75 per cent of the total aluminium output." See loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Hance, op. cit., p. 49.





industrial raw materials, and the main purpose of state intervention in external trade was to ensure that the war-effort was not jeopardised by the limitations of private enterprise.<sup>1</sup> Two basic necessities were that optimum use should be made of the available shipping space and limited reserves of foreign currency.<sup>2</sup> In many cases these requirements were irreconcilable with the aims of private enterprise, due to war-time conditions, with the result that import licensing and state monopoly purchasing were introduced.

Licences, though varying considerably in the limitations they imposed upon importers, were intended to regulate the quantities of specific goods entering the country, in accordance with priorities set by the economic planning machinery. The commodities least essential to the war-effort were awarded the lowest priority status, and subjected to the highest degree of restriction.<sup>3</sup> State purchasing also occurred in a variety of forms, sometimes replacing unsatisfactory licensing arrangements, but essentially it involved a Government agency exercising

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<sup>1</sup>J. Hurstfield, The Control of Raw Materials, in History of the Second World War: United Kingdom Civil Series, ed. W. K. Hancock, London, 1953, Chapter 10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 137.

Until the successful completion of the 'lend-lease' agreement with the United States, in 1941, the problem of finding sufficient currency to pay for vital imports from that country was uppermost. Thereafter, shipping shortages tended to be the major difficulty. See, also, W. K. Hancock and M. M. Gowing, British War Economy, in History of the Second World War: United Kingdom Civil Series, ed. W. K. Hancock, London, 1949, Chapter 4.

<sup>3</sup>Hurstfield, op. cit., pp. 139-43.





its authority to monopolise the import of a particular commodity.<sup>1</sup>

Both state purchasing - usually known in the literature as 'bulk purchasing' - and import licensing were designed to permit the most efficient use of shipping space and foreign currency, particularly dollar, reserves. The Government agency responsible for a specific commodity could determine the quantity to be allowed into the country, and also its place of purchase. By early 1941 Government control was made complete by the extension of state purchasing to cover all imports of food and raw materials into the United Kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

Hence, the predominance of state monopoly purchasing, in the British import trade, was established gradually, according to the dictates of need rather than a precise overall plan.<sup>3</sup> The necessary arrangements for the purchase of particular commodities were negotiated between the governments of the United Kingdom and the other country, or countries, involved.<sup>4</sup> In the case of colonial territories, as opposed to foreign states, and the Dominions, negotiations were rendered simpler than usual by the absence of conflicting sovereignties. The Colonial Office was regarded as the representative of dependent territories, and arrangements

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 143-50.

<sup>2</sup>Leubuscher, op. cit., p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>4</sup>Hurstfield, op. cit., pp. 143-50.



relating to them were made entirely within the British Cabinet.<sup>1</sup>

The doctrine of 'collective responsibility' attached to Cabinet decisions, and the fact that the Secretary for the Colonies could be out-voted or over-ruled, meant that potentially, at least, the interests of colonial producers were not protected so well as those of foreign and Dominion citizens, who had the advantage of being represented by independent governments. In practice, the welfare of colonial peoples was not disregarded, but the United Kingdom's interests remained paramount in the event of a clash. By 1945, the whole output of colonial products for export was being purchased by British Government departments.<sup>2</sup>

For the duration of the War the British West African territories were grouped together as a single unit for many purposes, and from 1942 this tendency was consolidated by the appointment of a resident Cabinet Minister, whose function was to coordinate the conduct of British affairs in the four colonies.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the arrangements made for marketing the Gold Coast's export produce were part of wider schemes also involving the other territories. This was particularly true of agricultural, and related vegetable, commodities. The most important of these, to the United Kingdom's war-time economy, were oil-bearing products - including copra, palm

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<sup>1</sup>Leubuscher, op. cit., pp. 67-72.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>Bourret, op. cit., p. 148.





kernels, palm oil and groundnuts -, of which the West African colonies produced a substantial proportion of the world's supply.<sup>1</sup> In September of 1939, the Ministry of Food assumed full responsibility for importing the United Kingdom's requirements of vegetable oils and oil-bearing solids, and arranged to purchase the whole exportable surplus of the West African colonies. With the loss of alternative supplies from the Far East and the Pacific Lands, and with the increased difficulty of obtaining marine oils, this source became crucial to the maintenance of the war-effort.<sup>2</sup>

Cocoa, the Gold Coast's major export commodity, was, however, subject to quite different considerations and accordingly received different treatment. It was not a vital foodstuff and could not be regarded as essential to the successful conduct of the War. On the other hand, cocoa had accounted for more than half of the Gold Coast's pre-1939 exports, by value, and was clearly of fundamental significance to the country's economy.<sup>3</sup> In Nigeria cocoa was less important, but it still comprised about 17 per cent of the total value of exports.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, lingering official memories of the damage incurred by the cocoa industry during the First

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<sup>1</sup>Leubuscher, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

Bourret, op. cit., pp. 149-50.

<sup>4</sup>Leubuscher, op. cit., p. 20.





World War, when the loss of European markets had severely reduced production, continued to trouble local governments. It was with these considerations in mind that the United Kingdom Government, through the Ministry of Food, undertook in 1939 to purchase the whole of the West African cocoa output for the duration of hostilities. The decision was made in full knowledge of the fact that it would probably not be possible to either ship or market all of the cocoa bought by the Ministry.<sup>1</sup>

Initially, the Ministry of Food purchased both cocoa and vegetable oil products from the established export firms, which had handled those commodities before the outbreak of the War. To facilitate collection from local producers, the firms were licensed to act as official buyers for the Ministry, and each was allocated a quota of the total output, on the basis of past performance. Such an arrangement served two purposes; bulk purchasing could be quickly and simply

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<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

P. Ady, "Bulk Purchasing and the Colonial Producer," Bulletin of the Oxford University Institute of Statistics, Vol. 9 (1947), pp. 321-22.

For an official account see:

Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Cmd. 6554, "Report on Cocoa Control in West Africa, 1939-1943, and Statement of Future Policy," 1944.

Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Cmd. 6950, "Statement on Future Marketing of West African Cocoa," 1946.



introduced, while the pre-War structure of external trade could be safeguarded.<sup>1</sup>

In 1940, however, responsibility for dealing with cocoa was transferred from the Ministry of Food to the West African Cocoa Control Board, an organisation under the authority of the Colonial Office. The Ministry of Food subsequently purchased the United Kingdom's requirements of cocoa from the Board, which remained free to dispose of the balance of cocoa production as profitably as possible, subject to shipping controls. The establishment of the W. A. C. C. B. placated African hostility to the expatriate firms which had previously dominated the cocoa trade, and had aroused local resentment by indulging in price-fixing practices.<sup>2</sup> It also provided the Colonial Office with the opportunity to regulate consumer purchasing power in the colonies concerned. Cocoa prices paid to local producers were set by the Board, and hence could be manipulated in order to check inflationary trends.

<sup>1</sup>Bourret, op. cit., p. 150.

Leubuscher, op. cit., pp. 10-11, and 20-21.

Ady, op. cit., p. 322.

V. D. Wickizer, Coffee, Tea and Cocoa: An Economic and Political Analysis, Stanford, 1951, pp. 328-31.

<sup>2</sup>The Nowell Commission found price-fixing to be the main reason why African farmers would not sell their cocoa to European merchants during the 1937-'38 season.

See Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Cmd. 5845, "Report of the Commission on the Marketing of West African Cocoa," 1938.





This factor was an important motive underlying the decision, made in 1942, to centralise the whole of West African marketing operations by establishing the West African Produce Control Board (W. A. P. C. B.). The new organisation, which was also responsible to the Colonial Office, incorporated the earlier Cocoa Control Board. It also managed the collection and sale of all other agricultural export products.<sup>1</sup>

Although the W. A. P. C. B. was able to easily dispose of oil-bearing commodities, which were bought in their entirety by the United Kingdom Ministry of Food,<sup>2</sup> many problems were encountered in the selling of cocoa. During the 1930's the British market for cocoa had absorbed only about 13½ per cent of the world's supply, and under the stringency of war-time conditions the United Kingdom's requirements were even lower.<sup>3</sup> Occupied Europe had previously provided a large market for cocoa, but trade with the major purchasing countries was not possible during the War. The United States had been the largest single consumer before 1939, regularly buying more than one-third of the world's production during the 1930's, but shipping shortages caused great difficulty in expanding cocoa sales to that country.

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<sup>1</sup>See: Wickizer, op. cit., pp. 331-34.  
 Leubuscher, op. cit., pp. 10-11 and p. 21.  
 Ady, op. cit., *passim*.

P. T. Bauer, West African Trade: A Study of Competition, Oligopoly and Monopoly in a Changing Economy, London, 1963, Chapter 20.

<sup>2</sup>Leubuscher, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>Ady, op. cit., p. 323.

This factor was an important factor in the

decision, made in 1911, to concentrate the whole of the

African marketing operations in the hands of the

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In addition, production had risen faster than consumption during the previous decade, and in 1939 the countries which processed cocoa held very large stocks, which restricted demand even further.<sup>1</sup> During the early years of the War, the W. A. P. C. B. had consequently to destroy 200,000 tons (about one-third of the world's annual production) of unmarketable cocoa. By 1943, however, the American market had expanded, and the shipping shortage eased sufficiently to absorb surplus production.<sup>2</sup> The institution of government purchasing in the United States, in that same year, allowed the negotiation of reassuringly large contracts. It was largely to match that development that the W. A. P. C. B. decided, also in 1943, to dispense with the services of the established export and shipping firms and to expand its own sales organisation.<sup>3</sup>

One of the more fundamental consequences, for colonial economies, of the United Kingdom's introduction of state monopoly purchasing was, thus, the " . . . replacement of a number of private commercial concerns by statutory centralized marketing agencies with monopoly powers."<sup>4</sup> Once a British Government department had requisitioned the exportable surplus, or a large proportion thereof, of a commodity from a particular colony, regardless of the reason, then it became necessary to centrally coordinate supply. It was important to expedite

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 321-23.

<sup>2</sup>Leubuscher, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 22-23.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

In addition, production has been lower than average in  
during the previous decade and in 1979 the average yield  
exceeded 2000 lbs per acre which was a record.  
Second, even though, during the 1970s, the  
U. S. P. C. had consistently to decline from 1960  
onwards as the world's supply production of bananas  
increased. In 1942, however, the banana market was expanded,  
and the shipping volume also increased in 1942  
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One of the more important developments for colonial  
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number of private companies in banana production  
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Government's decision to ship bananas from the United States  
at a large proportion of the cost of a banana from a  
colonial, regardless of the reason, was in banana  
to establish a monopoly. It was important to establish

1. 1942-43, 1943-44  
2. 1944-45, 1945-46  
3. 1946-47, 1947-48  
4. 1948-49, 1949-50



collection from producers, in order that the best use of shipping space might be made. Other advantages of centralised selling also became apparent, including the simplification of transactions which accompanied the establishment of a single sales organisation, and the possibility of negotiating large and long-term sales contracts. In the case of British West Africa, at least, an additional special consideration was the desirability of controlling producer prices, for the corollary purpose of checking inflation.

However, the significance of the war-time control measures was not limited to the 1939-'45 period. It was decided in 1944, by the British Government, that the marketing of West African cocoa by public agency, with monopoly status, would be continued after the War.<sup>1</sup> In justification, the Government's policy statements drew heavily upon the findings of the Nowell Commission, which had criticised the structure of the pre-War export trade, alleging it to be poorly suited to economic conditions in West Africa.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Cmd. 6554, op. cit., which was later supplemented by Cmd. 6950, op. cit.

<sup>2</sup>The report of the Nowell Commission (Cmd. 5845, op. cit.) revealed a number of disadvantages in the system, which consisted of a small number of European firms buying, through commissioned agents, and exporting cocoa. The proliferation of 'middle-men' was considered excessive, and particularly damaging to producers' interests. Harmful, too, were the frequent attempts of the European firms to agree to a common price amongst themselves. The findings of the Commission have, however, been vigorously attacked by Bauer, op. cit., Chapter 16.





The main purpose of the post-War marketing authorities was to be an attempt to control excessive fluctuations in the prices paid to cocoa farmers. Price instability had been a chronic feature of the pre-1939 cocoa trade, both within seasons and between years, and had rendered production more amenable to speculation than sound farming practices.<sup>1</sup> Whereas price changes over several years could reflect a rational adaptation to world market conditions, it was believed that wild fluctuations within a single season, and often between days, were unnecessary and undesirable. The experiences of the W. A. P. C. B. suggested that it would be worthwhile to have a single price fixed for a season, and the White Papers of 1944 and 1946 stressed the desirability of short-term stabilisation.<sup>2</sup>

Subsequently, in 1947, Cocoa Marketing Boards were established in Nigeria and in the Gold Coast. Both Boards were initially financed by the W. A. P. C. B. which transferred, from its own surplus fund, £16 millions to the Gold Coast and £9.2 millions to Nigeria for that purpose.<sup>3</sup> The principal functions of the Gold Coast Marketing Board, as

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<sup>1</sup>Ady, op. cit., p. 328.

The great differences in day to day prices were believed to have increased the problem of rural indebtedness; the ability of a farmer to repay loans depended on whether he sold his crop on a 'good' or 'bad' day.

<sup>2</sup>Cmd. 6554, op. cit., and Cmd. 6950, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Wickizer, op. cit., p. 353.

The main purpose of the present study was to test the hypothesis that the degree of genetic differentiation between populations is related to the degree of geographic isolation. The degree of genetic differentiation was estimated by the number of alleles per locus. The degree of geographic isolation was estimated by the distance between populations. The results showed that the degree of genetic differentiation was significantly related to the degree of geographic isolation. This suggests that genetic differentiation is a result of geographic isolation.

The results of the present study are consistent with the hypothesis that genetic differentiation is a result of geographic isolation. The degree of genetic differentiation was significantly related to the degree of geographic isolation. This suggests that genetic differentiation is a result of geographic isolation.

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described in the enabling Ordinance, were:

. . . to secure the most favourable arrangements for the purchase, grading, export and selling of Gold Coast cocoa, and to assist in the development by all possible means of the cocoa industry of the Gold Coast for the benefit and prosperity of the producers.<sup>1</sup>

To offset African misgivings over continued public control of the cocoa trade, the Board was provided with an autonomous status, and accorded a constitutional structure in which Government representation was subordinate to that of local interests.<sup>2</sup> Thus, four members were to be nominated by the Governor, and the remaining six were to be elected by producers, buyers and African administrative councils in the areas concerned with cocoa farming.<sup>3</sup> In the following two years similar arrangements were made for controlling the export trade in other agricultural commodities. By 1949 the W. A. P. C. B. had been completely decentralised; each colony possessed its own marketing boards. From 1949, the Gold Coast's export crops, other than cocoa, were handled by the Gold Coast Agricultural Marketing Board, which had a mandate similar to that of the Cocoa Board.<sup>4</sup>

The Agricultural Marketing Board, however, proved to

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<sup>1</sup>Gold Coast Ordinance No. 16 of 1947; quoted in Tony Killick, "The Economies of Cocoa," Chapter 15 in The Economy of Ghana, op. cit., p. 366.

<sup>2</sup>Each marketing board was constituted as an independent corporate body. See Carney, op. cit., p. 73.

<sup>3</sup>Wickizer, op. cit., p. 353.

<sup>4</sup>Carney, op. cit., Chapter 5.

distributed in the preceding volumes, were

to which the most careful attention was given for the purpose of securing a more complete and correct statement of the facts and circumstances of the case, and of the results of the investigation.

The following table gives a summary of the

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of very limited utility, and in 1955 it was absorbed by the newly-appointed Agricultural Development Corporation.<sup>1</sup> During its brief existence it was also over-shadowed by the monolithic Cocoa Board, which soon emerged as an innovation of fundamental importance to the Gold Coast economy. Within a short time of its establishment, the latter encountered troubled controversy over its policies which endured for a number of years. Basic to the discussion of the propriety of the Board's actions was the issue of price stabilisation, which, it was forcibly pointed out, had not been satisfactorily defined before or since 1947.<sup>2</sup>

By paying producers a price considerably lower than that which it received from its overseas sales, the Cocoa Marketing Board accumulated a massive net surplus of almost £24 millions, in its first year of operation (1947-'48).<sup>3</sup> That sum amounted to more than half of the total value of export sales of cocoa. Though proportionally smaller, large surpluses were also attained in the following three years. By 1951 the total accumulated surplus stood at £72.7 millions.<sup>4</sup> Thereafter, in the period up to 1957, there was a further net increase in the surplus balance of £12.3 millions.<sup>5</sup> From

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<sup>1</sup>Anyane, op. cit., pp. 168-69.

<sup>2</sup>See P. T. Bauer and F. W. Paish, "The Reduction of Fluctuations in the Incomes of Primary Producers," Economic Journal, Vol. 62 (1952), pp. 763-65.

<sup>3</sup>Killick, "The Economics of Cocoa," op. cit., p. 367.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Loc. cit.





1950, however, the Board's proceeds were cut by the imposition of a high export tax on cocoa. The existence of a centralised selling organisation meant that the duty could be obtained more easily than would otherwise have been the case. The levy also ensured that cocoa farmers would not be able to significantly increase their proportion of the returns from cocoa sales.

The development of the Cocoa Board's massive reserve fund proved to be the main target of criticism. It was alleged that withholding such huge sums from cocoa farmers was basically unethical, since it amounted to an unjustly severe imposition upon only one section of the community. The accusation was made that the Board's policy was tantamount to the compulsory socialisation of saving, and that it threatened to undermine the security of the cocoa industry's future, by preventing adequate levels of capital re-investment and by suppressing the response of production to long-term world price movements. Basically, however, the Board was considered, by its critics, to have grossly exceeded its mandate to formulate a short-term stabilisation policy for producer prices.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See:

P. T. Bauer and F. W. Paish, op. cit., and "The Reduction of Fluctuations in the Incomes of Primary Producers Further Considered," Economic Journal, Vol. 64 (1954), pp. 704-29.

P. T. Bauer, West African Trade, op. cit., Part 5.

P. T. Bauer, "Issues in Commodity Stabilization in Africa," Chapter 19 in Economic Development for Africa South of the Sahara: Proceedings of a Conference Held by the International Economic Association, ed. E. A. G. Robinson, New York, 1964.

M. Friedman, "The Reduction of Fluctuations in the Incomes of Primary Producers: A Critical Comment," Economic Journal, Vol. 64 (1954), pp. 698-703.





Refutation of some of these charges proved difficult, as the Cocoa Marketing Board had indeed functioned in an unexpected manner, under unanticipated circumstances. The consistent accumulation of large surpluses, which continued without pause until the mid-1950's, was, for example, rather surprising. Part of the difficulty in assessing that trend, as critics readily agreed, stemmed from the lack of clarity shrouding the obscure concept of price stabilisation. Intra-seasonal stability could be, and was, obtained by simply announcing the price to be paid to producers at the beginning of each season, but there was no official ruling, in the original mandate, to help determine whether or not that was sufficient. The 1944 and 1946 White Papers had ambiguously intimated only that inter-seasonal stabilisation would be desirable, whereas the 1947 Ordinance had assiduously avoided the issue.<sup>1</sup>

In practice, the Cocoa Board operated on the assumption that a degree of stability between years was necessary, and during the first few years concentrated on building a reserve fund capable of protecting farmers from the worst effects of a cyclic depression of the pre-1939 variety.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Bauer, "Issues in Commodity Stabilization in Africa," op. cit., Also Killick, "The Economics of Cocoa," op. cit., pp. 365-71

<sup>2</sup>Polly Hill, "Fluctuations in Incomes of Primary Producers," Economic Journal, Vol. 63 (1953), pp. 468-71.

P. Ady, "Fluctuations in Incomes of Primary Producers: A Comment," Economic Journal, Vol. 63 (1953), pp. 594-607.



After initial difficulties, in the first three years of the Board's existence, a fair measure of success was achieved. From 1950-'51 to 1960-'61 producer prices fluctuated, between seasons, by an average rate of 8 per cent, which compared favourably with the average of 23 per cent for export prices.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, it remained true that until the mid-1950's the stabilisation policy amounted to little more than withholding from producers a substantial portion of the proceeds from cocoa sales. Hence, the Cocoa Marketing Board acquired rather embarrassingly large holdings of surplus funds, which were ostensibly intended for use as price subsidies in lean years. As Bauer argued, however, it became increasingly difficult to reconcile the mounting reserves with official statements on stabilisation policy. The prospect of farmers being eventually paid such large sums was very remote.<sup>2</sup>

The main cause of the unexpected size of the stabilisation fund, apart from the unwillingness of the Board to transfer the full profit from sales to local farmers, was the large increase in the price of cocoa on the New York market. Until 1950 the United Kingdom retained the war-time bulk purchasing agreement for West African cocoa, with the result that, though not fixed, the price paid by the Ministry of Food was appreciably lower than it would have been under

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<sup>1</sup>Killick, "The Economics of Cocoa," op. cit., p. 368.  
p. 368.

<sup>2</sup>Bauer, West African Trade, op. cit., Chapters 22 and 23.





free market conditions.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the United States abolished the war-time fixed ceiling for cocoa prices in 1946, and de-control was immediately followed by a sharp upward surge. Whereas in 1939 the United States had held almost a full year's supply of cocoa, by 1944 domestic stocks were sufficient for only a few months, and at one point in 1948 for only twenty two days.<sup>2</sup>

The large American purchasing organisations consequently indulged in desperate buying tactics, forcing the price ever higher.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, production could not be increased sufficiently to meet the rising demand without a considerable time-lag. During the War the supply of cocoa had contracted significantly due directly to the low level of controlled prices, and had thereby intensified a trend towards lower output which had been apparent since the mid-1930's. Since cocoa plants require about seven years to mature, the post-War 'boom' in demand and prices did not immediately result in a significant expansion of production.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>From the 1942-'43 cocoa season, the Ministry of Food paid a price which was the average obtained by the Board, in the previous season, from all of its sales, including those to the Ministry, itself. See Leubuscher, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Wickizer, op. cit., p. 357 and p. 365.

<sup>3</sup>See Wickizer, op. cit., pp. 359-66.

<sup>4</sup>The comparatively low level of controlled prices was designed to effect a labour transfer from cocoa to vegetable oil production. See P. Ady, "Trends in Cocoa Production," Bulletin of the Oxford University Institute of Statistics, Vol. 11 (1949), pp. 389-404.





In concentrating their attention upon the high level of the Cocoa Marketing Board's reserves, critics tended to ignore the Board's responsibilities in areas other than the short-term price stabilisation field.<sup>1</sup> This was to overlook the wider terms of reference afforded by the 1947 Ordinance, which obliged the Board to seek to " . . . secure favourable conditions for farmers to develop the industry, and to improve world market conditions for cocoa."<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, between 1951 and 1960, £25 millions were expended on disease and pest control, alone.<sup>3</sup> Much of the money was used in the campaign against 'swollen shoot', a disease which threatened the future of the industry.

Certain other activities were perhaps less legitimate, technically, but were necessitated by circumstances not expected when the Board was established. It soon became evident, for example, that the cocoa industry could not be realistically managed without reference to the condition of the economy as a whole, and the Cocoa Board's policies were adjusted to accommodate that inter-dependence. In 1950-'51 cocoa farming, alone, directly accounted for more than one-third of the Gross Territorial Product of the economy,<sup>4</sup> excluding

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<sup>1</sup>For example, see Bauer's works cited above.

<sup>2</sup>R. H. Green, "Multi-purpose Economic Institutions in Africa," Journal of Modern African Studies, Vol. 1 (1963), p. 168.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>4</sup>Seers and Ross, op. cit., p. 4.



'subsistence' activities, in addition to providing almost 70 per cent of the total export earnings.<sup>1</sup> Hence, policy for the cocoa industry automatically constituted a major element of national economic policy; even if the two could be formulated separately, they could not be expected to operate independently.

It was also clear that while the immediate requirements of the cocoa industry were not necessarily identical with those of the overall economy, the industry was not certain to ultimately benefit if the Board ignored the needs of the total economy. If the prices paid to cocoa farmers were raised sufficiently to allow the full net return from export sales to be passed on by the Board, there was ample evidence to indicate that severe inflation, harmful to all sectors of the economy, would follow. In the immediate post-War years the country was physically incapable of substantially increasing its imports, and experiences in the later 1940's showed that a small rise in cocoa producer prices increased consumer purchasing power sufficiently to activate marked inflationary trends. The authors of the Seers-Ross Report deliberated in great detail upon this problem, and concluded that:

The money in the [Cocoa Marketing Board's] reserves might well have wrecked the economic structure, and the political structure too, if it had been passed on to the farmer; farmers' incomes would have out-run the supply of consumer goods.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Killick, "External Trade," op. cit., p. 333.

<sup>2</sup>Seers and Ross, op. cit., p. 6.





In these terms, the Board was fully justified in extending the scope of its policy to cover matters of national importance. Moreover, despite the proportion of sales proceeds withheld from producers, cocoa farmers experienced a doubling of their real income between 1939 and 1950-'51.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from the Cocoa Marketing Board's valuable role as an instrument of national fiscal policy, which was recognised but undefined, it also came to be regarded as a major source of development funds, both for the cocoa industry and the country as a whole. This, too, was deplored by critics who retained, in their arguments, the increasingly obsolete view that the Board was just a price-stabilising agent. The country urgently required development capital and the massive stabilisation reserve was considered an obvious, and by some a justifiable, source.<sup>2</sup> The Government tapped the reserve in two ways; first, by imposing large export taxes on cocoa and obtaining the revenue from the Board; second, by borrowing money directly from the accumulated reserve fund.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the 1951 Development Plan was mainly financed by domestic capital.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Green, op. cit., p. 169.

Barbu Niculescu, "Fluctuations in the Incomes of Primary Producers: Further Comment," Economic Journal, Vol. 64 (1954), pp. 730-43.

<sup>3</sup>Green, op. cit., p. 169.

<sup>4</sup>Omoboe, op. cit., p. 443.





By the mid-1950's the Cocoa Marketing Board had emerged as an undeclared, but major, vehicle for national policy, although " . . . the original fiction is still maintained and the Board still describes its responsibilities in terms of the 1947 Ordinance."<sup>1</sup>

#### THE MONETARY SYSTEM

The essential character of the Gold Coast's monetary system was described in detail for the pre-1939 period in an earlier chapter,<sup>2</sup> and it remains to consider modifications introduced in the 1939-'57 era. Basically, the structure of the system was changed very little, although the rigidity of the relationship between the money supply and the overall balance of payments was moderated. This was made possible by the growth of the Cocoa Marketing Board as an agent of fiscal policy, and by the extended scope of Government activities in the post-War period.

Both the Gold Coast Government and the Cocoa Marketing Board accumulated considerable surplus funds in the later 1940's and early 1950's, the former by surplus budgeting and the latter by retaining a substantial part of the returns from overseas cocoa sales. Both the Government and the Marketing Board maintained a proportion of their reserves in the form of sterling assets, and to that extent prevented

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<sup>1</sup>Killick, "The Economics of Cocoa," op. cit., p. 368.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter 5.



foreign earnings from increasing the Gold Coast's supply of domestic currency. On the other hand, in 1956 and 1957 deficits on the Gold Coast's overall balance of external payments were recorded. These were prevented from reducing the currency supply by deficit budgeting, on the part of the Government, and by the transfer of sterling assets to the domestic banking system, on the part of the Government and the Cocoa Marketing Board.

Both of these actions compensated for the deficit balances of payments, and therefore maintained the money supply at its existing level. Thus, by the mid-1950's, the formerly close relationship between the supply of money and the balance of payments was 'cushioned' by the actions of the Government and the Cocoa Board. It was possible, therefore, to remove the short-term dangers associated with excessive fluctuations in the money supply. Nevertheless, the relationship continued to be significant in a long-term context, for public 'hoardings' of foreign exchange could not be drawn upon indefinitely.<sup>1</sup>

Another disadvantage of the sterling exchange standard, as it existed in the Gold Coast, was that it produced a fundamental lack of concern for the money requirements of the internal sector of the economy. In the 1950's, as in the 1930's, it has been demonstrated that the expansion of the

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<sup>1</sup>See Tony Killick, "The Monetary and Financial System," Chapter 13 in The Economy of Ghana, op. cit., pp. 312-31.



foreign exchange from foreign exchange (Gold Coast) and  
domestic currency. The total value in 1954 and 1955 was  
of the Gold Coast's overall balance of external payments was  
reported. These were presented from including the currency  
reports by dollar, including, on the part of the Government,  
and of the transfer of working assets to the domestic banking  
system, on the part of the Government, and the local banking

Board

Note of these reports, submitted to the Board

balance of payments, and interest received on money

supply at the end of 1954. The year 1954-1955, the

Board's latest published figures show the supply of money and

the balance of payments with a surplus of 100 million in the

Government and the local bank. It was reported, however,

to the Board that the local bank had a surplus of 100 million

in 1954-1955. The Board's latest figures show the supply of money and

the balance of payments with a surplus of 100 million in the

Government and the local bank. It was reported, however,

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Government and the local bank. It was reported, however,

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in 1954-1955. The Board's latest figures show the supply of money and

money supply of the Gold Coast failed to keep pace with the growth of the domestic economy. Thus, the system proved to be a consistently restrictive factor, retarding internal development even in prosperous times.<sup>1</sup>

### SUMMARY

The fundamental structure of the Gold Coast economy remained much the same in the 1939-1957 period as it had been before World War II.<sup>2</sup> Growing post-War prosperity and the undertaking of a number of impressive capital investment projects, particularly, the construction of a new harbour at Tema, did not disguise the economy's excessive reliance upon external trade. The cocoa industry remained the principal area of growth, and the main earner of income from exports, while the import trade continued to supply the great bulk of modern consumer and capital goods.

In many ways, the most significant feature of the post-1945 years was the growth of the public enterprise sector, a development which reflected both the more positive British colonial policy and the experience gained, during the War, of economic controls and planning machinery. By the later 1940's the local Government was directly, or indirectly, in charge of most of the export trade - with the exception of that in minerals - and programmes for agricultural development and

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<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>This impression is corroborated, in detail, in R. Szereszewski, Structural Changes in the Economy of Ghana, 1891-1911, London, 1965, Chapter 6.





industrialisation, in addition to its traditional wards in the transportation system - railways and harbours. Through the Cocoa Marketing Board, the Government was also able to exert considerable influence upon an important section of the country's purchasing power, a situation which permitted measures designed to protect the economy from its greatest potential weakness - inflation.



## CHAPTER VII.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The main theme of this study is that the British presence in the Gold Coast, during what has been referred to as the 'formal colonial' period, held special implications for the local economy. In view of the introduction of new cultural concepts and attitudes, forms of social organisation, methods of government, ideals of law, and external contacts, it could not have been otherwise. Such alien phenomena profoundly affected all aspects of traditional life. The present work, however, is primarily concerned with the nature and intensity of the British political impact upon the Gold Coast economy, and an attempt has been made to isolate this specific relationship.

On the basis of the preceding chapters, it is justifiable to postulate that the following factors, or groups of factors, were largely responsible for shaping and conditioning the 'political impact':

A. Those emanating from within the Gold Coast, including:

1. Domestic political affairs - amongst which might be included the disturbances in Ashanti at the turn of the century, which provided a significant motive for the speedy construction of the railroad to Kumasi, and the growth of the post-1945 independence movement.





2. The variable imagination and motivation of different British Administrations in the Gold Coast; Guggisberg's regime provides an outstanding example of a local government well-endowed with both of these qualities.
3. Domestic economic problems; administrative policies were to some extent guided by the requirements of the local economy. A particularly important problem, such as a bottleneck in the transportation sector, could exert a strong pressure for change.

B. Those emanating from the United Kingdom.

1. The general principles and objectives of colonial policy, which were, to a degree, influenced by circumstances within the Empire as a whole.
2. Domestic British political affairs; home affairs, unlike those factors already mentioned, could be a negative influence - in the sense of providing a distraction from imperial issues - or a positive influence upon colonial economies. The combination of events which placed Chamberlain in the Colonial Office, and the growth of acceptance of the need for state enterprise, were positive influences.
3. In similar fashion, the pressure and problems of foreign affairs could also influence colonial policy negatively or positively.

It would be misleading to suggest that the above classification incorporates the complete range of relevant factors, or that those included were fully independent of one another. Nevertheless, the six categories are not pure abstractions, and they do appear to be the most important groups. The British impact upon the Gold Coast economy tended to vary according to fluctuations in the relative significance of these categories. In any particular period one, or more of the groups tended to be more important than the others. This can be tentatively summarised in a schematic form of presentation.





The symbols used in the following tabulation refer to the classification system suggested above.

1901-'14			A3		B2	
1914-'18					B2	B3
1918-'29		A2	A3	B1		
1929-'39			A3	B1	B2	
1939-'45		A2	A3	B1	B2	B3
1945-'51	A1	A2	A3	B1	B2	
1951-'57	A1	A2	A3	B1	B2	

The table represents a summary of the main groups of factors influencing the political impact in the different periods. Thus, with the establishment of British rule throughout the country, at the beginning of the twentieth century, local political problems were effectively solved. Similarly, international rivalry in West Africa, between the European Powers, had ended several years earlier, with the Anglo-German and Anglo-French agreements. Hence, the most pressing problem for the Gold Coast Administration was to facilitate the country's economic development.

In the period before 1914 much effort and capital were directed by the Government into the transportation sector. During this period, on the other hand, influences originating from the United Kingdom were comparatively weak. The Colonial Office's enthusiasm for 'positive imperialism' largely disappeared with the resignation of Chamberlain in 1903, and British politics as a whole became preoccupied with, first, the campaign for imperial preference and, second, the struggle at home between the Liberal and Conservative Parties.



During World War I, the 'A' categories, of the above classification, were completely overshadowed by the 'B' groups. The British political impact on the local economy was dominated by the requirements of the metropolitan war machinery. Thus, the low priority given to cocoa by the controllers of shipping had a severely adverse effect upon the Gold Coast economy, but it satisfied the United Kingdom's needs. No compensatory measures were adopted to protect the colonial country from a loss of trade, or from other economically-depressive consequences of war-time conditions.

The period from 1918 to 1929, the initial year of the Great Depression, was one in which local economic development progressed considerably. Guggisberg's unusually energetic Administration combined with the post-1918 flowering of the 'trusteeship' doctrine, in British colonial theory, to produce a major development effort in the Gold Coast economy. Progress was checked, however, by the onset of the Depression, which caused grave economic dislocation. Nevertheless, the Depression also prompted the re-consideration of colonial policy and led to the growing acceptance, within Britain, of the need for the state to adopt a more active role in economic affairs.

By 1940, the Colonial Office and the United Kingdom Government as a whole had assumed a new and more positive attitude towards state intervention in colonial economies. This became clear during, and after, World War II, and was manifest in the forms of increased government controls and





the growth of public enterprise. After 1945, too, local political circumstances began once more to play an important part in conditioning the British impact upon the Gold Coast economy. The growth of an independence movement, within the country, tended to stimulate a much greater interest in undertaking development projects. From 1951, the embryonic national Government of the Gold Coast directed much of its energy into that field.

The generalised interpretation represented by the summary table serves to indicate a number of salient features of the political impact upon the local economy, including its increased complexity after 1939. During the earlier part of the twentieth century, interest in the economic development of colonies in general was very limited, although the Gold Coast experienced remarkable growth during the 1920's, but from about 1939 it became widespread. Whereas the Gold Coast and its Administration were left much to their own devices before 1939, and particularly before the end of World War I, the metropolitan Government revealed a consistent interest in the territory during and after the Second World War. Hence, the political factors encouraging economic change were more numerous in the latter period.

One of the more important consequences of the growth of interest in the Gold Coast's economic development was the increased significance of the public enterprise sector of the





economy, and of state controls over economic activity in general. Indeed, these appear to be two of the most important and enduring imprints left by British rule on the local economy, and upon the economies of the other colonies of ex-British West Africa. Pedler has argued that the origins of this situation lie in the consistent refusal of the colonial authorities to permit expatriate land ownership in West Africa.

From the moment when they put the land out of reach of the law of supply and demand, the governments of the four countries embarked upon a course which led towards State enterprise.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, before 1939 there was little interest in developing a strong public sector of the economy, and state controls were very few. In the Gold Coast, the Administration was mainly concerned with using its available resources to assist private enterprise, and its more positive actions were guided by the obvious limitations of the private sector, as in the field of transportation development. From 1939, however, quite apart from the arrangements required by war-time conditions, it became clear that neither private enterprise nor the traditional administrative policies were capable of ensuring a desirable rate of economic development, or adequate protection for the economy. Consequently, the post-World War II growth of state controls and enterprise was inspired by more positive stimuli than had been present

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<sup>1</sup> F. J. Pedler, "Foreign Investment in West Africa," International Affairs, Vol. 31 (1955), p. 460.





previously.

British rule in the Gold Coast cannot be upheld as an outstanding example of colonial exploitation, whatever the motives were for the original annexation. The sub-title of George Padmore's book, The Gold Coast Revolution: The Struggle of an African People from Slavery to Freedom,<sup>1</sup> is surely too melodramatic to convey an accurate impression of the real relationship between the Colony and the Metropolis. As in the other West African territories, the British Administration in the Gold Coast proved to be a benevolent, though rather paternal, dictatorship which concentrated on using its scant resources to promote the welfare of the peoples under its care. In 1917, for example, amidst the turmoil of war with Germany, there was the interesting spectacle of the Gold Coast Governor - Sir Hugh Clifford - protesting to the Colonial Secretary against the economic sanctions to be imposed upon post-War Germany, on the grounds that they were likely to harm the local economy.<sup>2</sup>

Other than in war-time, the only significant attempt to deliberately 'exploit' the Gold Coast was the introduction of the oil palm kernel export controls in 1919, but even they were abandoned within two years of their inception. The colonial currency system had the affect of aiding the

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<sup>1</sup>London, 1953.

<sup>2</sup>See G. E. Metcalfe, Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History, 1807-1957, London, 1964, pp. 559-63.





Sterling Area in its quest for dollars, during and after World War II, but it cannot be regarded as having been deliberately exploitative. When it was introduced into the Gold Coast, in 1912, the main concern was to establish a stable and convenient currency. It is at least likely that the Gold Coast benefited as much as the United Kingdom from the arrangement.

Perhaps a more telling indictment of British rule, in an economic sense, is that the Administration did little to encourage growth in the domestic economy, or to minimise the country's dependence on external trade. Most of the Government's efforts were directed into facilitating production for export and the smooth flow of exports and imports. The result was that the economy, like those of most other colonial territories, was unduly dependent on conditions in world markets and in overseas sources of manufactured goods. Thus, growth was neither as consistent nor as balanced as is now considered desirable.

However, this is very much a retrospective point of view, and there is no reason to suppose that circumstances would have been much different had Britain not ruled the Gold Coast. Moreover, the governments of newly-independent countries, throughout the world, are not finding the solution to this problem to be a simple one. Finally, an important overall effect of British rule in the Gold Coast was the provision of a framework for not only political development, but also for the economic concretion of a territory traditionally consisting of highly disparate regions.









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## KEY

(Figure 3)

1. Compound farming area.

### INTERIOR SAVANNA ZONE

- 1 & 3. Compound farming mixed with land rotation as in 3.
2. Grazed grassland with rare land rotation cultivation.
3. Land rotation with grazed tree savanna regrowth fallow.
4. Less intensive land rotation with sparsely grazed tree savanna regrowth fallow and scattered patches of 5.
5. Little-cultivated ungrazed tree savanna, including forest reserves.

### DERIVED SAVANNA ZONE

6. Land rotation with cocoa in forest outliers mixed with less intensive land rotation in more extensive patches of savanna.
7. Less intensive land rotation with tree savanna regrowth fallow and some small cultivated forest outliers.
8. Little-cultivated, ungrazed tree savanna mixed with occasional patches of incompletely developed closed forest or secondary forest.

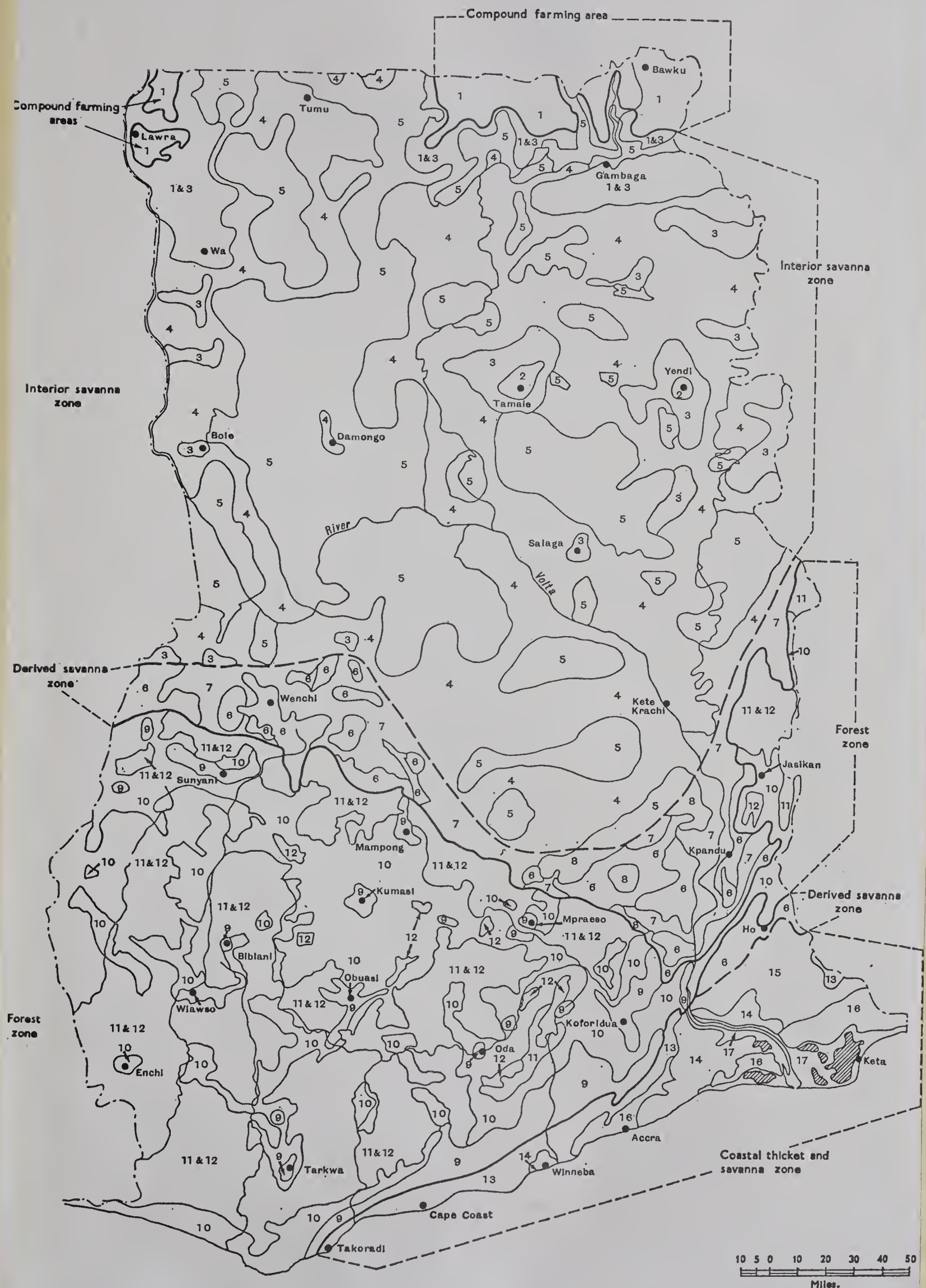
### FOREST ZONE

9. Intensive land rotation with negligible forest remaining: area of most commercialized food cropping.
10. Land rotation with a small percentage of forest remaining: area of most extensive established cocoa, including areas of newest cocoa planting, especially in the north-west.
11. Less intensive land rotation with much forest remaining.
12. Little-farmed closed forest, including forest reserves: area (outside the reserves) of most active timber exploitation.

### COASTAL THICKET AND SAVANNA ZONE

13. Coastal thicket.
14. Grass savanna.
15. Tree savanna.
16. Savanna-thicket transition.
17. Lagoons and marshes.

# GHANA : FARMING TYPES

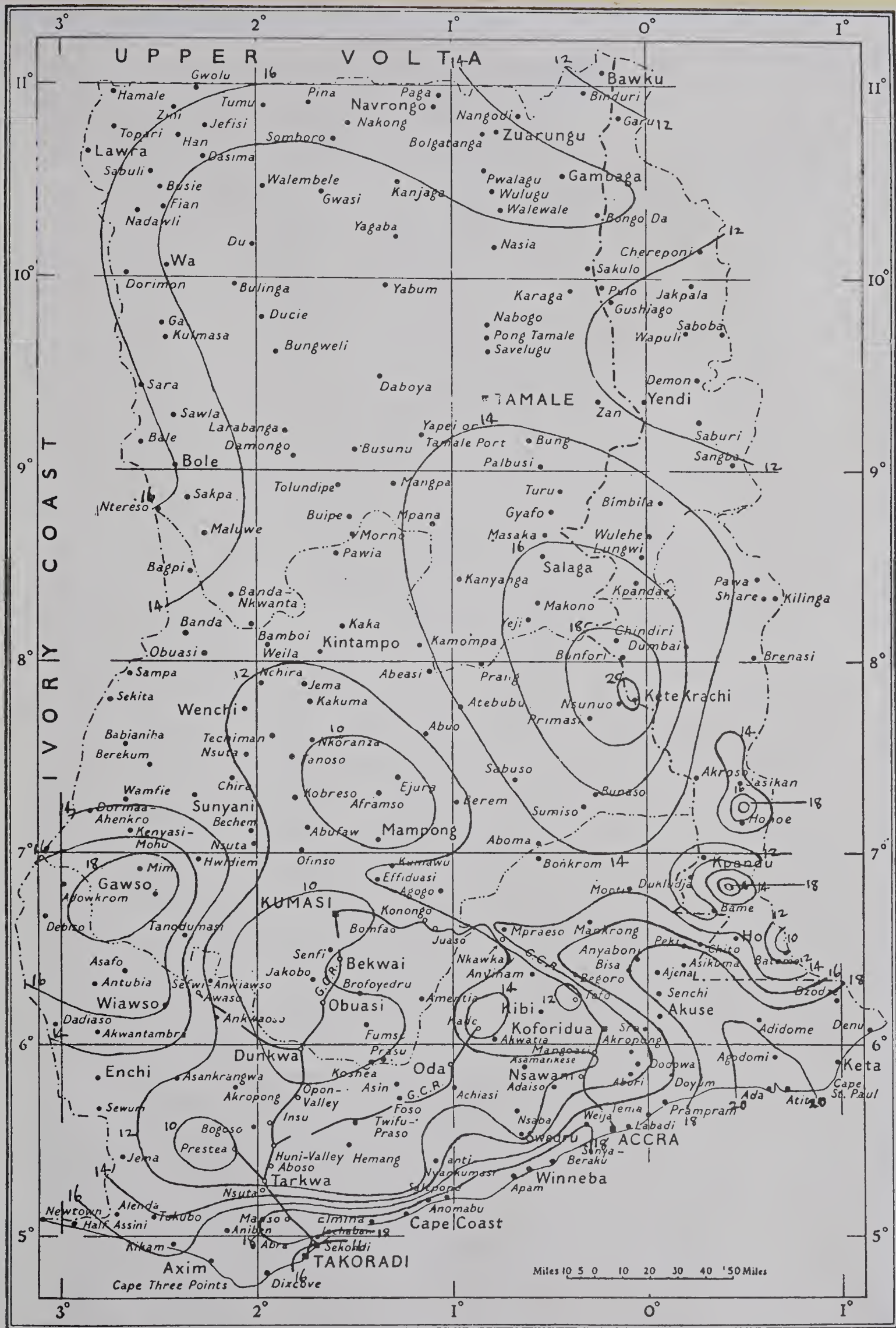


Source : J.B. Wills, ed., Agriculture and Land Use in Ghana, 1962, p.202.

Figure 3





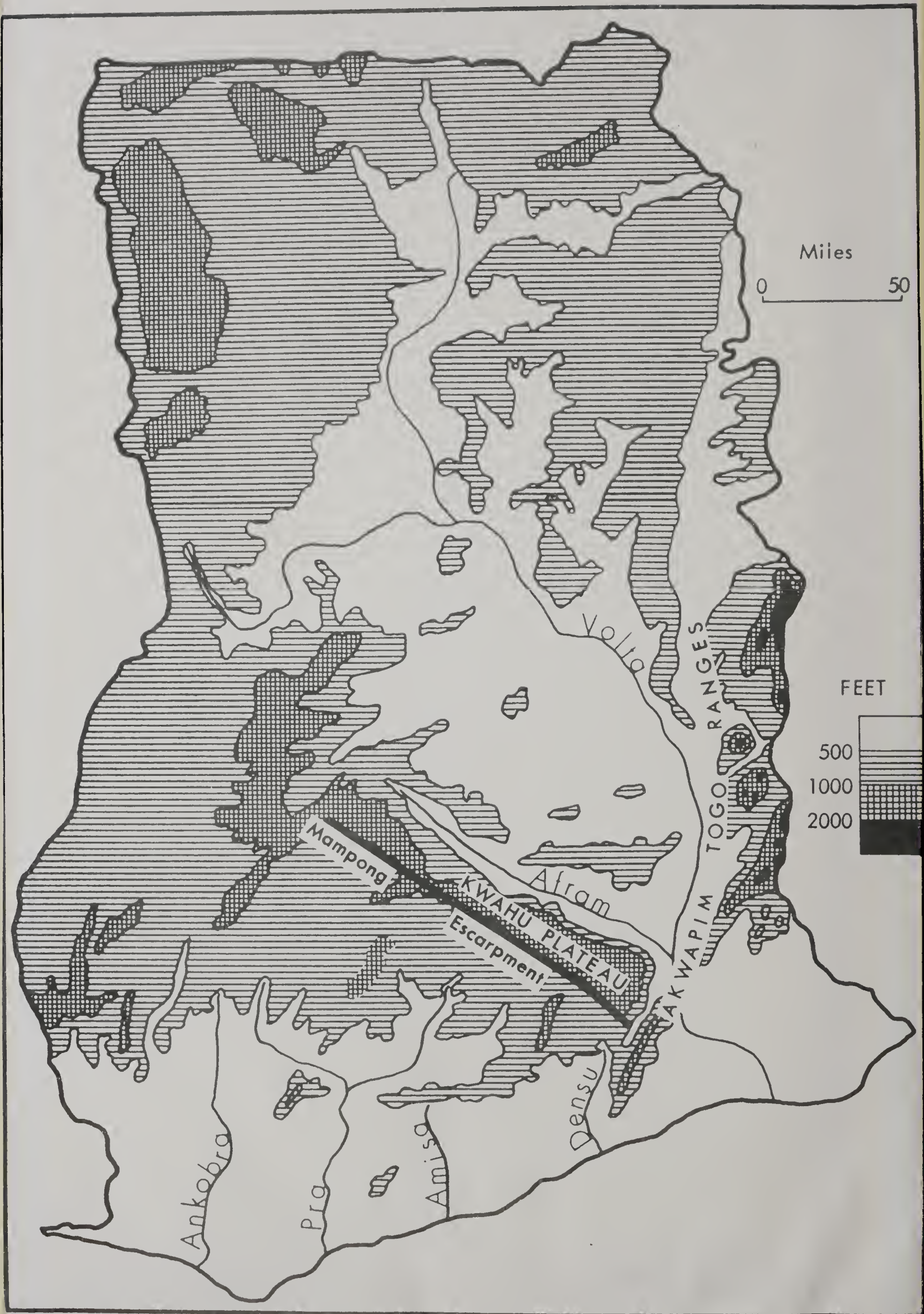


Ghana: Relative variability (%) of rainfall.

Source : J.B. Wills, ed., Agriculture and Land Use in Ghana, 1962, p.14.



# GHANA: RELIEF



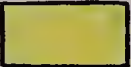



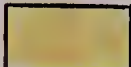
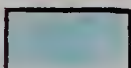

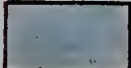
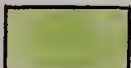
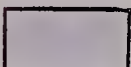
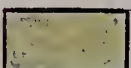

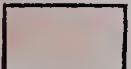
Source : P.R. Gould, Transportation in Ghana, 1960, p.7.

Figure 6



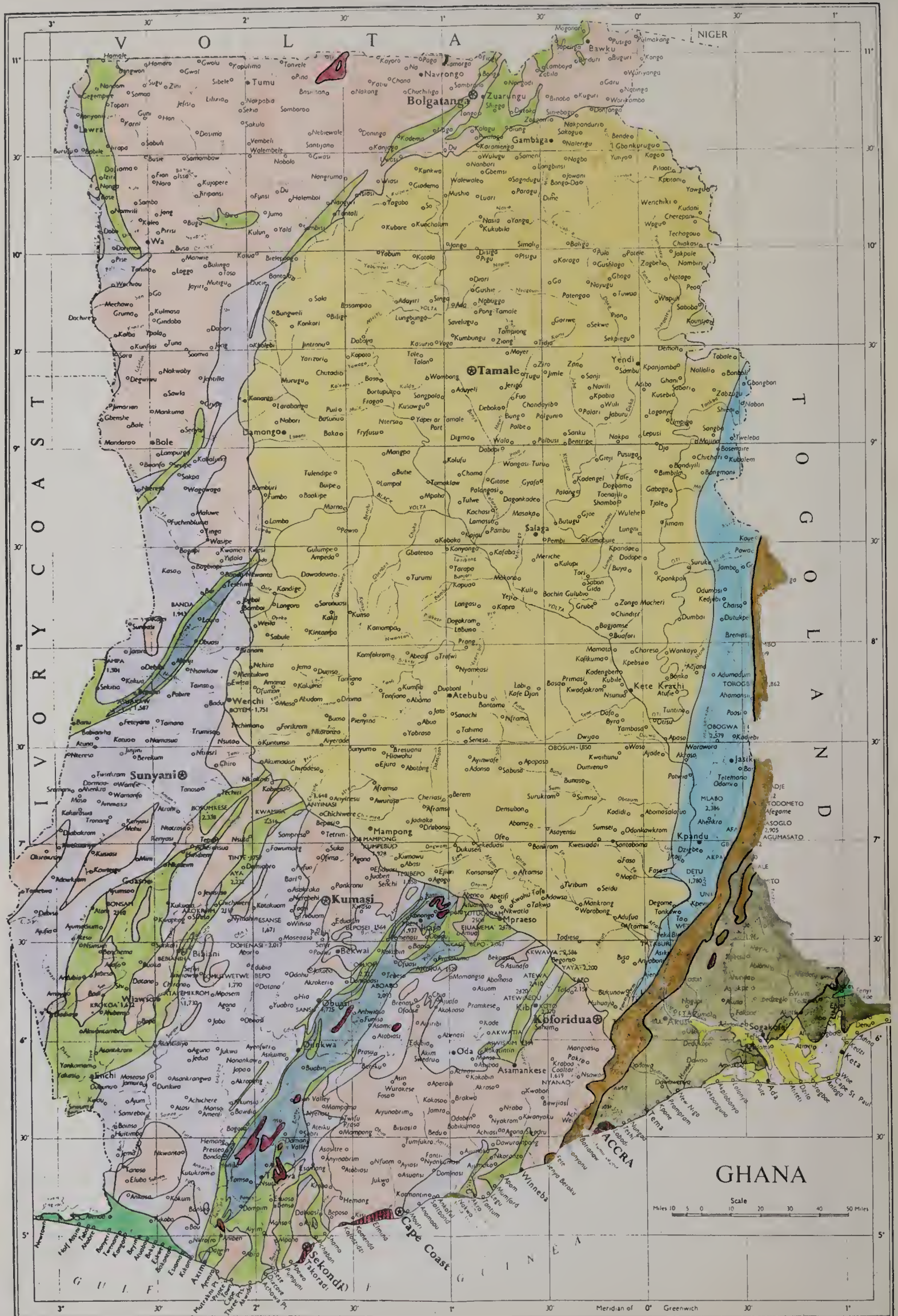
# TABLE OF FORMATIONS

(Figure 7)

RECENT		Unconsolidated Sand, Clay and Gravel
TERTIARY		Red Continental Deposits, mainly Limonitic Sand, Sandy Clay and Gravel
EOCENE & CRETACEOUS		Marine Series of Shale, Sandstone, Limestone.
SEKONDIAN & ACCRAIAN (Devonian)		Sandstone, Grit, Conglomerate, Shale and Mudstone.
VOLTAIAN (Palaeozoic)		Quartzite, Shale, Arkose, Mudstone.
BUEM FORMATION (Upper Pre-Cambrian)		Shale, Sandstone, Arkose, Lava.
TOGO SERIES		Quartzite, Shale, Phyllite.
TARKWAIAN		Quartzite, Phyllite, Grit, Conglomerate.
UPPER BIRRIMIAN		Metamorphosed Lava, and Pyroclastic Rock
LOWER BIRRIMIAN (Middle Pre-Cambrian)		Phyllite, Schist, Tuff and Greywacke.
DAHOMAYAN (Lower Pre-Cambrian)		Acidic and Basic Gneiss and Schists.
BASIC INTRUSIVES		Gabbro, Dolerite, Epidiorite.
GRANITES (Middle Pre-Cambrian)		Granite and Granodiorite.



# GEOLOGY



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Figure 7



GREAT SOIL GROUPS

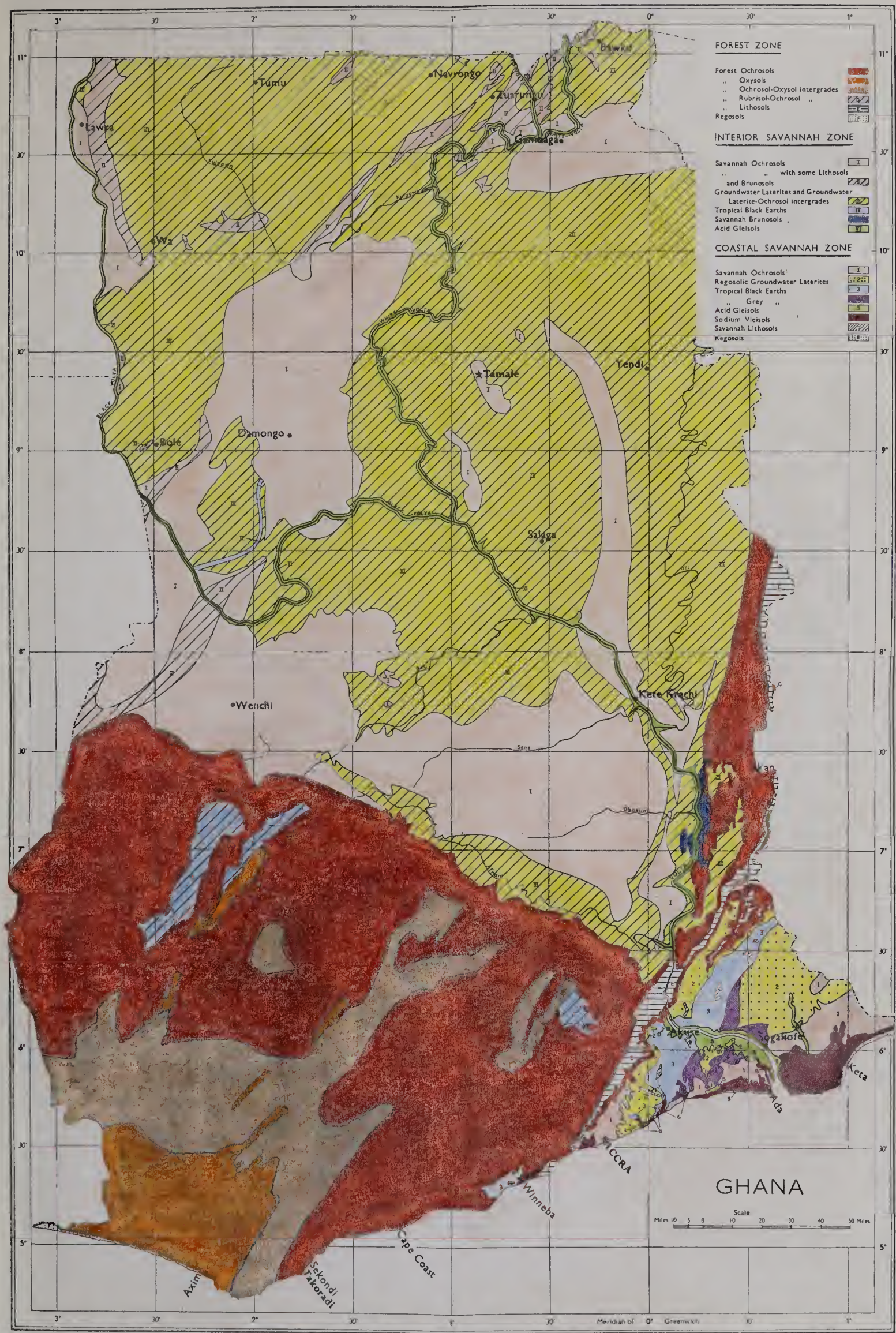


Figure 8



# VEGETATION ZONES

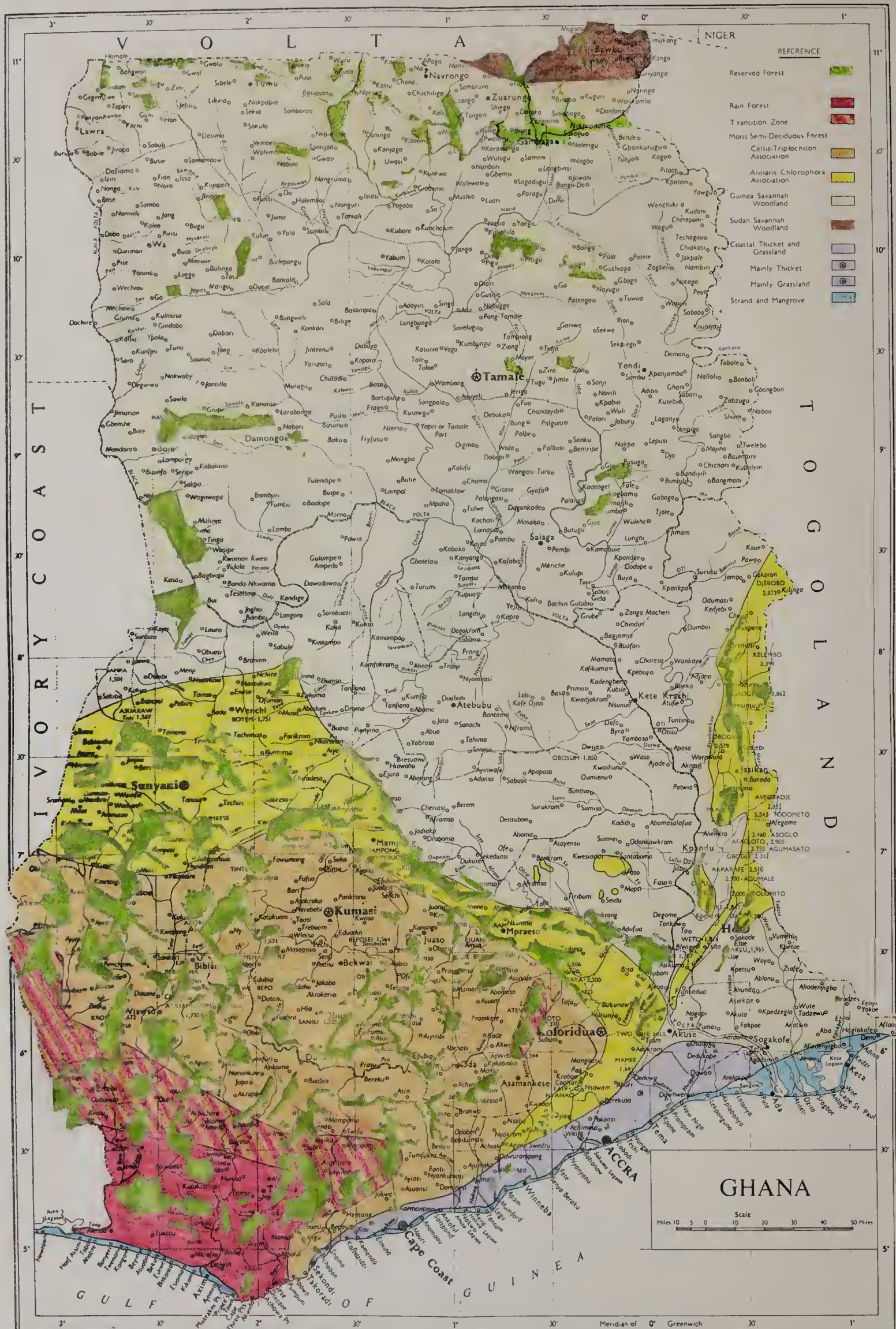


Figure 9





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